



Aram Thinaï ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

POWERING CHANGE

Towards Localised
Climate Resilience and
Eco-Social Justice



NOTE FROM THE CO-FOUNDERS

In Pursuit of Just and Resilient Futures

When people ask what drives us to work in the eco-social spaces various thoughts and feelings pop-up – Is it anger, empathy, personal satisfaction/happiness, strive for justice, survival instinct or what else? We believe it is a combination of most of these but at the centre of it is Perambu பேரன்பு (Love), love for the people and the planet. With Climate Change being an inevitable, how we as humans respond to it will define our future. We believe that climate change is an extension of the prevailing eco-social issues and will disproportionately impact the already oppressed and marginalised. An intersectionality understanding of climate change with local relevance is critical to anchor the climate actions in the desired direction i.e. towards “Localised Climate Resilience”. Aram Thinai is a humble effort to enable this transition.

I have had a very mainstream upbringing – you have some privileges, a success path is defined for you, you work hard and you will be more privileged which you can then be transferred to the next generation. I followed it to an extent, was the school topper, joined a coveted college, got a high paying job. I am not captious of this completely, however the critical question is whether this path is accessible for all especially in a world with limited resources and extreme inequalities. One thought led to another, started reflecting deeply through travel and books and slowly my world view changed around ideas of development and human civilisation. Since November, 2017 when I quit my job, I have been contemplating on how to convert the various emotions mentioned earlier into impactful actions that bring on-ground change. I have worked with various organisations and movement and each gave me enriching experiences with a lot of learnings to take away. And now, I and my colleague Benisha have embarked on an enthralling journey of starting Aram Thinai, an initiative for enabling a transition towards localised climate resilience and eco-social justice. While we were discussing the name of the organisation back in 2022 much before we started, the thought was to keep it rooted and connected to intersections of ecological and social justice while showing an alternate pathway to current model of development.

NOTE FROM THE CO-FOUNDERS

Aram means righteousness. It is a highly valued word in Tamil literature and also the title of 1st part of the renowned Thirukural. Thinaï can be roughly translated to ecological landscape and its relationship with humans linking land, life and livelihood. Tamil tradition and literature have mentions of 5 key Thinaï - Kurinji (Mountain region), Mullai (Forests and grasslands), Marutham (fertile cropland), Neithal (Coastal areas) and Palai (Deserts and Dry lands). The two words form the core of our work and thus the name.

Amidst the global crisis of climate change, environmental degradation, trans-national wars and other humanitarian injustice, what can a small organisation like Aram Thinaï do? What impact will few farmers doing organic farming, few people consuming organic, documenting and protecting few wetlands, engaging few youths to think critically have on a global crisis, the scale of which is not comprehensible? – We might not have all the answers, but we believe we are Wangari Mathai's hummingbird trying out best to stop the forest fire carrying small amounts of water in our little beak. We strongly believe the forest fire will eventually be quenched, and a lot of hummingbirds like us will play a major role. Churning through opportunities, execution of our innovative ideas and projects, fund raising and balancing our go with the flow attitude that we acquired from the movement space and the systems and structures that an organisation requires; we have crossed one year. We understand that this is not a sprint race but a marathon, a collection of thousands of small and consistent steps. We live through and cherish every step and want to take you along this journey. While the world is reeling through global transnational crises, we are sharing with you the seeds of hope that we are sowing from our humble office in Chennai. We will continue with hope for justice to prevail, hope for ecology to thrive and hope to heal the world while we heal ourselves.

**With Regards,
Karthik G,
Co-founder & Managing Trustee**



WHO WE ARE

GROUNDING IN ARAM; ROOTED IN THINAI

Aram Thinaï is a platform for people, especially youth to reimagine our collective futures by working on the intersections of climate change and local livelihoods, and eco-social justice. We aim to catalyse the eco-social change required for the transition towards Localised Climate Resilience.

We define Localised Climate Resilience as a pathway for climate action which is based on local landscape and community needs and rooted to their socio-cultural wisdom i.e. local knowledge, local livelihoods and local economy. In the current centralised socio-political scenario, local governance and local action are vital for resistance against any act of jeopardising the shift towards Localised Climate Resilience.

Our work focuses on:



Understanding Climate Impacts on Marginalised People



Building and Documenting working models



Supporting Community led responses to local climate impacts



Creating experiential learning spaces



Communicating grassroots stories and impacts



VISION AND MISSION

OUR DIRECTION

Our Vision:

We envision a future of socially, ecologically and economically just society centered around land, life and livelihood, (Thinai) driven by righteousness (Aram), sustainability and equitability.

Our Mission:



Enabling intersectional and nuanced understanding of climate change with local relevance especially among youth to anchor the climate actions in the desired direction i.e. towards “Localised Climate Resilience”.



Enabling various models and inclusive collaborations for supporting nature based livelihoods, climate change adaptation and mitigation



Amplification of the voices of marginalised communities and other life forms

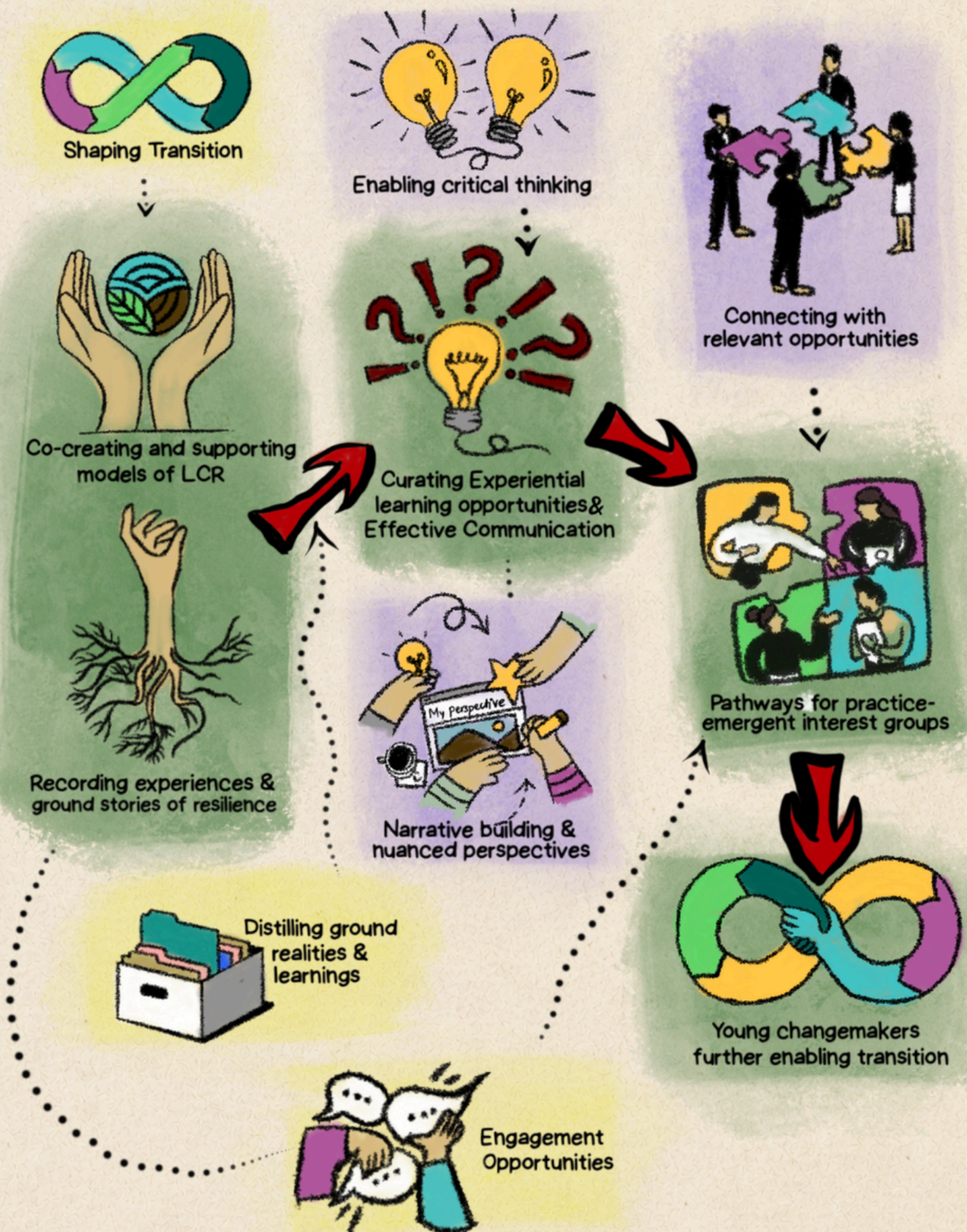


Shifting the narrative of development from mere economic growth towards people’s wellbeing



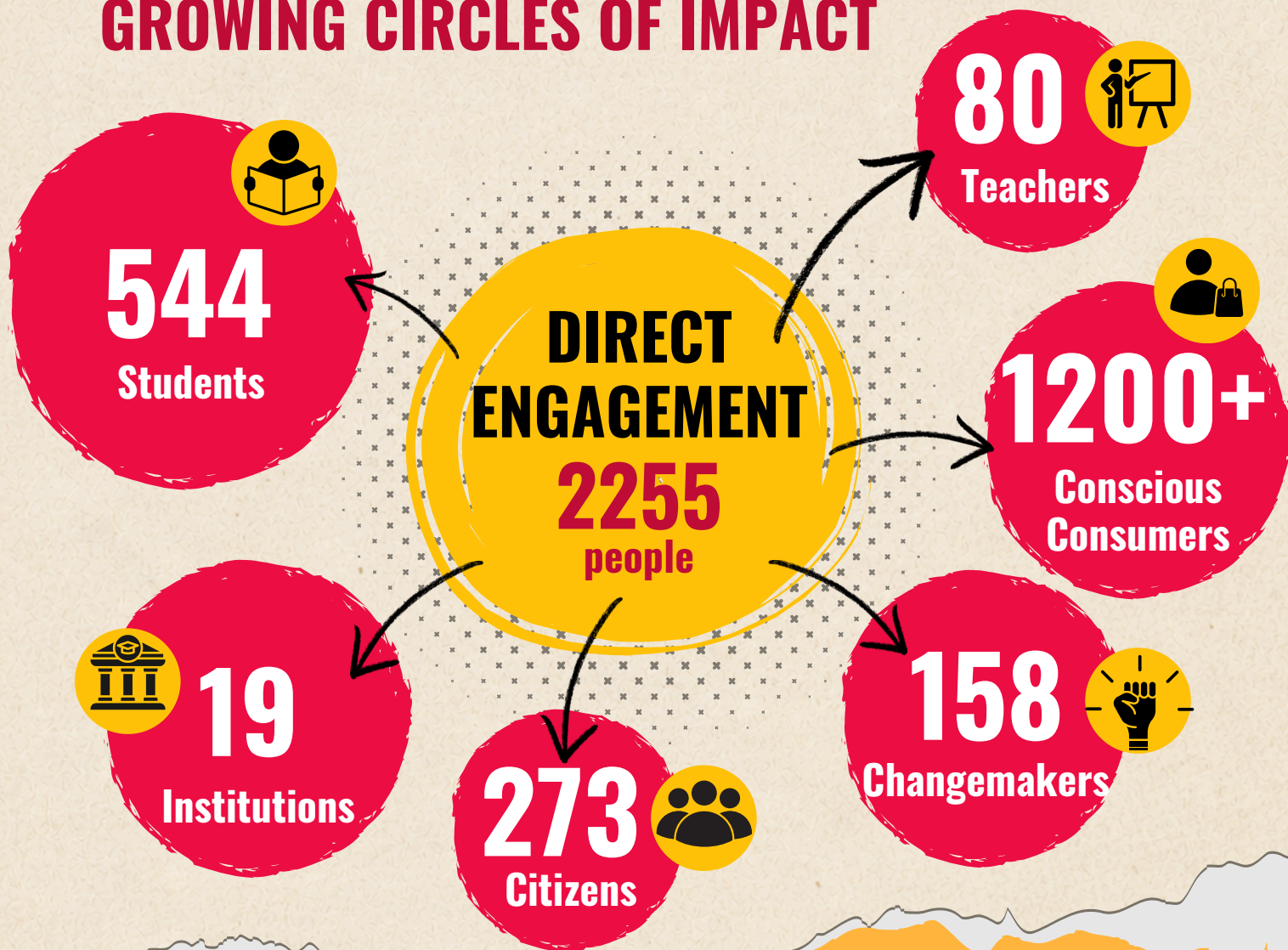
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR FRAMEWORK FOR ECO-SOCIAL JUSTICE



OUR IMPACT

GROWING CIRCLES OF IMPACT



INDIRECT ENGAGEMENT



OUR PROJECTS



CLIMATE RESILIENT CHENNAI



CHENNAI FOODSCAPE PROJECT



CHENNAI WETLANDS PROJECT

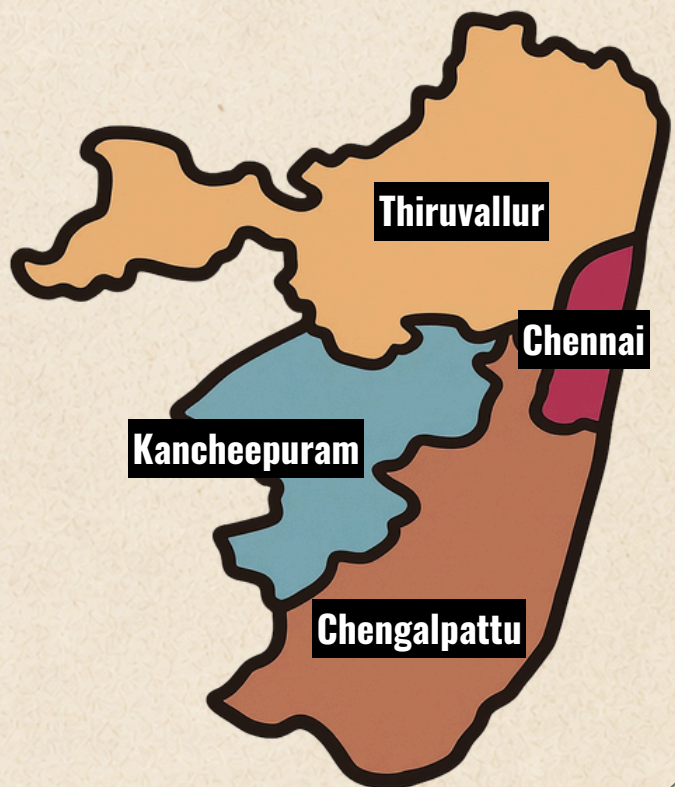


YOUTH AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CHENNAI FOODSCAPE PROJECT

According to a study by Urban Design Collective, the food miles of Chennai is highest among the 9 major cities in India at 1137 km/1000 kg of food. However, records from the 18th-century Barnard Survey indicate that Ullavur, Chengalpattu achieved an average paddy yield of 4.1 to 6.0 tons per hectare during the 1760s much higher than the current production levels. The peri-urban areas of Chennai and its 3 neighbouring districts – Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur which was once a major agricultural zone is rapidly urbanising with reducing cultivation area. As urbanization reshapes food system dynamics in the Global South, cities have become the primary consumers of global food production. Moreover, chemical input-based cultivation, monocropping and increasing influence of traders and big corporations has caused degradation of soil, depletion of water resources, farmers distress, health issues, nutritional deficiencies, environmental hazards, and aggravated climate change. Rapid urbanisation in the peri-urban districts of Chennai is also increasing the climate vulnerability of the coastal city – flood risks, heat island effect and food security concerns are rapidly increasing. A transformative change in our food systems is critical to transform the agrarian economy and Chennai's health and will also play a major role in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation.

Chennai Foodscape Project is an initiative for enabling sustainable transformation of the Food Systems of Chennai. Foodscape akin to landscape, is an overview of food consumption patterns in a locality. The aim is to enable the transition of Chennai's Food system towards Organic and healthy food (Organic), shorter supply chain (Local) and Fair price for farmers and consumers (Just). The Chennai Foodscape Project will focus on the food consumption pattern of Chennai residents and the farmers in the peri-urban districts of Chengalpattu, Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram.



From Idea to Ecosystem

We are organising a monthly organic farmers market in T Nagar, Chennai. Organic Farmers, women groups, and small-scale social entrepreneurs who produce 100% organic food products and eco-friendly home utility products set up stalls in the market. The market is a zero-plastic event and includes other aspects like kids' engagement sessions, workshops, waste collection drives, Samathuva Pongal celebration etc. The market is having a very good reception among consumers while it is supporting around 100 organic farmers (including farmer groups) and around 10 small-scale social entrepreneurs in marketing their produce with average overall sale of Rs 3-4 lakhs/market. The market aims to increase Authenticity, Accessibility and Affordability of organic food in Chennai. We are planning to expand it to more places and increase the frequency.



ARAM ORGANIC FARMERS MARKET

Broad categorisation of products available in our market

Organic Fruits, vegetables and greens

- ➔ 25+ varieties of greens
- ➔ 30+ varieties of vegetables
- ➔ 10+ varieties of fruits

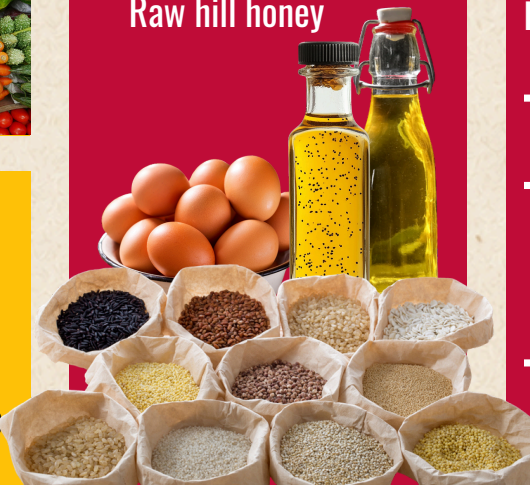


Eco-friendly home utility products

- ➔ Mud cookware
- ➔ Palm leaf craft
- ➔ Soaps and cleaners etc

Organic grocery

- ➔ 20+ varieties of traditional rice
- ➔ Millets
- ➔ Pulses
- ➔ Cold pressed oils
- ➔ Spices from Kolli hills
- ➔ Sweetners - Sugarcane and Palmyra palm based, Raw hill Honey
- ➔ Country chicken, Kadaknath chicken eggs
- ➔ Dairy products - Ghee, paneer, curd etc. Raw hill honey



Organic value added products

30+ varieties of traditional rice and herbal based value added products

Amla, Wood apple, fig, pirandai, groundnut based value added products

Organic Sweets, Savouries and baked products

- ➔ 10 varieties of chocolates
- ➔ 10+ varieties of traditional rice/ millet sweets, cookies & baked products
- ➔ 10+ varieties of traditional rice/millet savouries

Health cooked snacks and drinks

20+ varieties of snack and drinks (both hot and cold)

Breakfast and lunch - cooked food

Traditional rice and millet based breakfast and lunch options



Gardening products

- ➔ Native seeds
- ➔ Organic inputs
- ➔ Saplings







Reconnecting with Soil

We are organising Weekend vivasayi (translating to Weekend Farmer), an organic farm visit program for children, youth, and the public of Chennai. The program is customized according to the audience but generally involves discussion on food and farming, farm tour, simple farm activities and lunch/breakfast. It is also emerging as a platform for people from the city to escape the city life and reconnect with nature. We have identified suitable organic farms nearby Chennai and collaborate with them for such programs. We have already engaged over 100 people in the farm visits

Sl. No	Date	Program	Participants
1	13/10/2024	Livelihood Tour- Agani Organic Farm, Chengalpattu	14
2	02/03/2025	Livelihood Tour- Agani Organic Farm, Chengalpattu	12
3	10/08/2025	Weekend Vivasayi- Agani Organic Farm, Chengalpattu	30
4	14/09/2025	Weekend Vivasayi- Agani Organic Farm, Chengalpattu	35
5	10/01/2026	Weekend Vivasayi- Nilavembu Organic Farm, Thiruvallur; In collaboration with Linga Bhairavi Organic Store	36
Total Number of Participants			117



FARMER IDENTIFICATION AND AUTHENTICATION

Promoting Organic Farming

Building Farmer Networks

Connecting Peri-urban Organic Farmers: We are developing a database of organic farmers in the peri-urban districts – Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur. The Organic Farmers Database currently has 160 organic farmers with 50 farmers being authenticated through field visits. The aim is to connect farmers within the districts and also with relevant market opportunities and build communication channels. We are planning to update the database comprehensively and organize farmers meetings for connection and knowledge sharing.



(Map showing locations of Organic Farms recorded in our database)

160

Organic Farmer Database
(marked in ●)

50

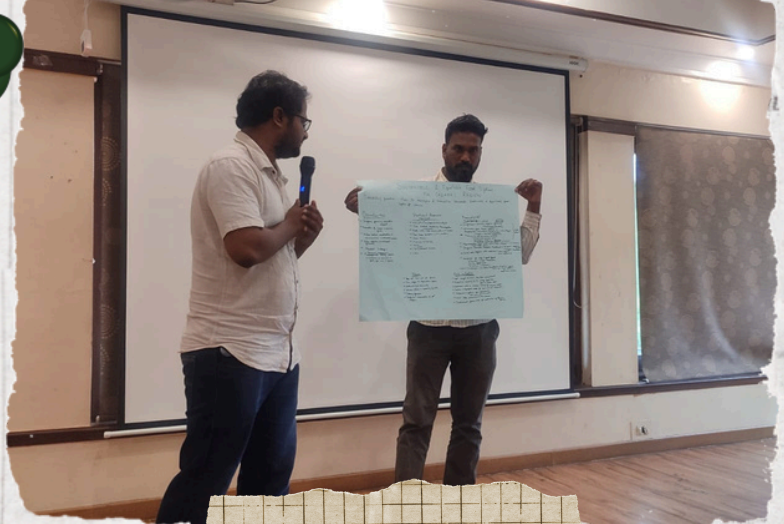
Field verified organic farmers through field visits
(marked in ●)



Influencing Systems

We are working on policy advocacy with the government for promotion of peri-urban organic agriculture and ensuring safe and nutritious food for all.

Aram Thinaï was part of the organising “Cultivating Resilience: Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture in Policy and Practice”, a multi-stakeholder workshop as part of ARiSE (Agroecology for Resilience, Sustainability, and Entrepreneurship) – IIT Madras on 28th October, 2025 at Madras Boat Club, Chennai. The workshop brought together over 30 farmers, policymakers, urban planners, academics, and citizen groups to explore how sustainable agriculture can strengthen Chennai’s food systems and urban resilience. Our Co-founder, Karthik facilitated the workshop and presented on “Chennai’s Peri-Urban Farmer’s Point of view”.

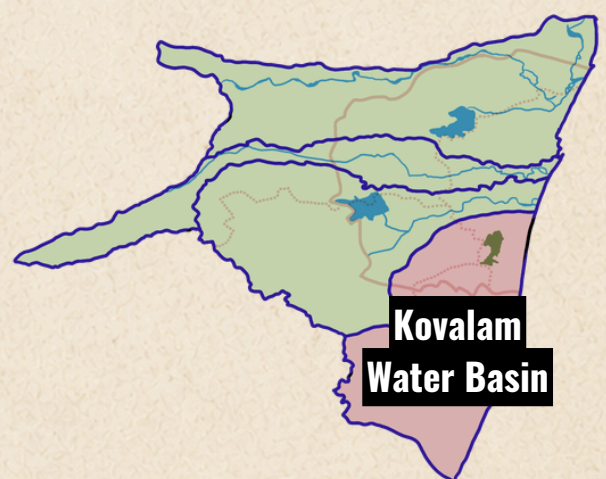


CHENNAI WETLANDS PROJECT

The second vertical of Aram Thinai's work towards building climate resilience in Chennai focuses on the city's waterscape—an interconnected system of wetlands, marshes, backwaters, and waterbodies that have historically shaped its ecology and livelihoods. Over time, however, rapid urbanisation has systematically disregarded these fragile ecosystems, often at the cost of both environmental integrity and the lives of marginalised communities who depend on them. Chennai's transformation from a watershed city interwoven with agrarian landscapes into a dense metropolitan region has resulted in profound shifts in land, water, and social relations.

As the city continues to expand, particularly across its peri-urban edges, these patterns of erasure and exclusion risks are being repeated. Wetlands are encroached, water flows are disrupted, and local knowledge systems are overlooked in the pursuit of development. In this context, it becomes critical to pause and reflect on past trajectories, while actively engaging with present transformations to imagine more equitable and ecologically sensitive futures. The waterscape, therefore, becomes not just a site of environmental concern, but a lens to understand questions of justice, resilience, and urban planning.

Through the Wetlands Project, Aram Thinai engages with the Kovalam water basin—one of Chennai's rapidly urbanising regions—to document and interpret these ongoing changes. The project seeks to build a rich, place-based archive that brings together narratives of disappearing wetlands, shifting land use patterns, and evolving community identities, alongside ethnographic stories from the ground. By translating these insights into accessible and public-facing formats, the initiative aims to make these transformations visible to a wider civic audience, fostering awareness, dialogue, and collective stewardship of Chennai's waterscapes.



Journey through the waterscape

The Wetland Tour offers an immersive journey through the wetlands, canals, and lakes of the Pallikaranai watershed in South Chennai. The tour critically traces the urbanisation of Chennai by examining how its wetlands and marshlands have been transformed over time. As one of the city's rapidly peri-urbanising regions, South Chennai provides a powerful lens to understand how unplanned development has reshaped natural landscapes while turning the city into a metropolitan hub. The tour also highlights the complex intersections between wetland conservation, flood mitigation, and systemic social exclusion, particularly the ways in which marginalised communities are often displaced or disadvantaged in the name of environmental protection. Through guided visits to key ecological and urban sites across the watershed, participants gain first-hand insight into the ecological significance, historical transformations, and social realities shaping Chennai's wetlands today.

Sl. No	Date	Audience	Participants
1	27/10/2024	Civic Audience	16
2	24/11/2024	Civic Audience	17
3	23/03/2025	Civic Audience	9
4	20/05/2025	Students from Olcott Memoriaal Higher Secondary School- Blue Green Centre	17
5	03/08/2025	For TEDx Adventures	30
6	21/09/2025	Civic Audience	10
7	14/11/2025	Students of Sunnyside Learning	10
8	10/01/2026	Students from Loyola College and Volunteers from Chennai Wetlands Action Collective	15
9	23/01/2026	Students from Womens Christian College	60
Total Number of Participants			184



WETLAND TOUR



Local ecologies to Living Stories

The Community Museum Project is a participatory, art-based initiative that seeks to build civic awareness among children by connecting them deeply with the ecological, social, and cultural narratives of their locality. Anchored in sustained engagement with school students, the project introduces young participants to the layered histories of their neighbourhoods—tracing urban morphology, understanding the transformation of waterbodies and wetlands, and examining shifts in local demographics over time. Through guided explorations, mapping exercises, storytelling, and discussions, children are encouraged to critically reflect on how processes of urbanisation shape everyday life, often producing unequal geographies and narratives of marginalisation.

Parallel to these engagements, the project undertakes a close reading of the locality's evolving socio-ecological landscape, situating children's observations within broader questions of environmental change, livelihoods, and cultural memory. This learning is then translated into creative outputs through art-based interventions, where children express their understanding using visual, spatial, and narrative forms. These outputs collectively contribute to the making of a Community Museum—envisioned not as a static display, but as a dynamic, locally rooted repository of knowledge.

Predominantly exploring the potential of public art, the Community Museum becomes a shared space that documents and communicates local ecologies, lived experiences, and community histories. It serves as an evolving archive of place-based memory, fostering a sense of ownership, identity, and stewardship among participants, while also inviting the wider community to engage with and reflect on their changing environment.

Phase 1	Orientation and Engagement with Schools
Phase 2	Wetland Investigation and Socio-Cultural Study
Phase 3	Field Visits, Community Engagement and Exposure to Socio-Cultural stories and Local Ecologies
Phase 4	Production of Community Museum
Phase 5	Showcase of Community Museum

Adambakkam - Nanganallur Community Museum by Students of Chirpi Global School

Students from Chirpi Global School have actively carried forward the Community Museum Project in the Nanganallur–Adambakkam region through inquiry, observation, and reflection rooted in their immediate surroundings. Using their neighbourhood as a living classroom, they explored changing land-use patterns, shrinking waterbodies, lost lakes, Veerangal Odai, and the region's ecological connection to Pallikaranai Marsh. Through mapping exercises, field visits, and conversations, students developed a deeper understanding of urbanisation, heritage, and the relationship between marginalised communities and local ecologies. Building on these learnings, they translated their insights into art-based expressions using visual, spatial, and storytelling formats. Their works evolving around themes like - urban transformation, flora and fauna of the region, and nuances of water. The students are currently in the final stages of developing the Community Museum, which will be showcased at the end of June as a dynamic archive of the Nanganallur–Adambakkam region.



Perumbakkam Community Museum by Students of IRCDUC Afterschool Centre

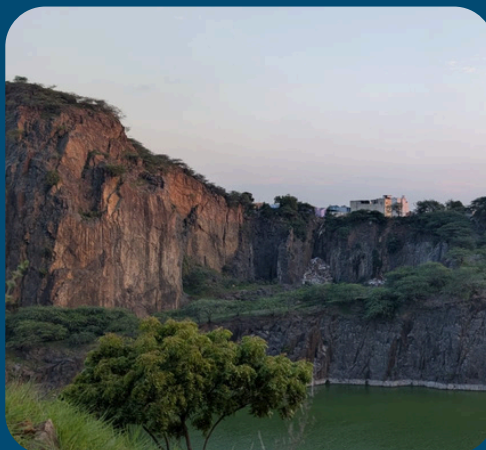
We have started engaging with students of IRCDUC's Afterschool Centre in Perumbakkam Slum Clearance Board. While the memories of floods have been deep in their minds, the students are being oriented towards unfolding its causes. The Perumbakkam Community Museum Project will bring together knowledge on local waterbodies, wetland ecology, flood histories, and lived realities of displacement and resettlement. Drawing from oral histories shared by community elders, early settlers, and local experts, along with data generated through participatory mapping and research, the students will collaboratively translate these materials into an immersive, art-based exhibition. The exhibition will be designed to encourage dialogue—inviting visitors to reflect on questions of climate justice, urban planning, and ecological responsibility centering Perumbakkam's experiences.



Studying the System

The Wetland Investigation Study is conceived as an in-depth, interdisciplinary inquiry into the ecological and infrastructural dynamics of urban wetlands, with a focus on understanding their critical role in flood mitigation and water management. Anchored within the Pallikaranai watershed of the Kovalam water basin, the study examines the interconnections between natural hydrological systems and built infrastructure, mapping how altered water flows, drainage networks, and land-use changes influence flooding patterns. By combining spatial analysis with grounded observations, the study seeks to identify points of stress within the system, including disruptions to water pathways, declining wetland capacities, and vulnerabilities within stormwater infrastructure.

Building on this framework, the study also foregrounds lived experiences and local knowledge to map flood-prone areas and seasonal variations, offering a more nuanced understanding of risk. So far, the investigation has closely engaged with key wetlands including Adambakkam Lake, Puzhudhivakkam Lake, Madipakkam Lake, Moovarasampet Lake, and Veerangal Odai, documenting their ecological functions, current conditions, and the pressures they face. By bringing together ecological insights, infrastructural assessments, and community narratives, the study aims to generate context-sensitive recommendations that prioritise restoring hydrological connections, strengthening drainage systems, and enhancing the resilience of these wetland landscapes.



YOUTH AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Youth and Civic Engagement Program at Aram Thinaï seeks to reconnect learning with the lived realities of people, place, and environment through place-based education. Collaborating with schools, colleges, collectives, and civic organisations across Chennai, the program enables students and youth to critically engage with climate change, urbanisation, food systems, wetlands, biodiversity, and questions of development through experiential and inquiry-driven learning. Key initiatives such as the Localised Climate Resilience Module encourage students to reimagine climate-resilient neighbourhoods through actionable projects rooted in social and ecological justice. Through exhibitions, workshops, public programs, podcasts, and visual storytelling platforms, the initiative also creates wider spaces for dialogue and collective reflection on building just and resilient futures.

Institutions or Organisations Engaged



Chirpi Global School



Tamil Nadu Science Forum



Sunnyside Learning



Asian College of Journalism



DakshinaChitra



Mop Vaishnava College



TYCL



MEASI Academy of Architecture



Off Paper



Women's Christian College



Agaram Foundation



Loyola College



Bhumi Foundation



DG Vaishnava College



Pichandikulam Forest

Learning from neighbourhoods

We offer a place-based learning approach that connects core subjects with the local environment, culture, and community.

Modules we offer,

- **Localised Climate Resilience Module**
- **Rethinking Development Module**
- **Understanding Climate Change**
- **Know your Food Module**
- **Chennai Bluescapes Module**
- **Reimagining Public Spaces**

Sessions Conducted so far

Sl. No	Date	Institution	Session Title
1	27/02/25	Chirpi Global School	Know your Food
2	06/05/25	Siruseri Blue-Green Centre	Chennai Bluescape
3	22/05/25	Agaram Foundation	Understanding Climate Change
4	26/05/25	Olcott School- Blue Green Centre	Chennai Bluescape
5	27/05/25	Olcott School- Blue Green Centre	Know your Food
6	28/05/25	VIT College- Agaram Foundation	Know your Food
7	July '25	Chirpi Global School	Reimagining Pulic Spaces
8	11/07/25	MOP Vaishnava College	Rethinking Development
9	10/08/25	Bhumi Foundation	Understanding Climate Change
10	12/08/25	Sabari College of Nursing	Understanding Climate Change
11	21/08/25	Tamil Nadu Science Forum	Chennai Bluescape
12	29/10/25	Asian College of Journalism	Rethinking Development
13	25/11/25	Climate Change Media Hub	Rethinking Development

Localised Climate Resilience Module for Sunnyside Learning

The Localised Climate Resilience Module conducted for the students of Sunnyside Learning is a place-based learning initiative designed to help learners understand climate change through the lens of their immediate surroundings. While climate change is a global phenomenon, its impacts—such as flooding, heat stress, water scarcity, and waste management challenges—are experienced differently across local contexts and social groups. This module enables students to explore these intersectional challenges within their own neighbourhoods, encouraging them to observe, document, and analyse how environmental changes shape everyday life. Through this grounded approach, students begin to connect climate science with lived realities, building a nuanced understanding of vulnerability and resilience.

Structured over a three-month period, the module combines field-based inquiry, collaborative learning, and creative problem-solving to guide students in reimagining climate-resilient neighbourhoods. Participants engage in identifying local climate risks, studying traditional and contemporary resilience practices, and interacting with diverse stakeholders to understand planning processes. The learning journey culminates in the development of actionable, localised project plans that reflect both ecological sensitivity and social inclusivity. By fostering critical thinking, teamwork, and civic engagement, the module empowers students to become active contributors to climate action within their communities. Students will showcase their project on April 18, 2026 under the banner “Namma Chennai - Reimagining our neighbourhood” exhibition.



PLACE BASED EDUCATION

The project ideas undertaken by the students:

- Redesigning the local fish market as a climate resilient market
- Designing heat resilient uniform for sanitary workers
- Developing a menstrual sanitation kit for sanitary workers and gig workers
- Comic series on climate communication for public
- Redesigning the local bus stop for heat resilience
- Developing cooling solutions for houses in the fishing hamlet
- Mapping the open grounds and play areas in the locality and analysing their resilience to climate change



Rethinking Development Camp

May, 2025

The three-day camp on “Rethinking Development” brought together 18 participants for an immersive learning experience exploring the intersections of economy, ecology, and justice. Structured around the themes of Development, Distress, and Direction, the camp critically examined dominant models of growth and their social and environmental consequences while also providing prospect directions for action. Through interactive activities, discussions, and collaborative exercises, participants unpacked contemporary economic realities and their impacts on climate, livelihoods, and marginalised communities. Sessions also focused on understanding Chennai’s waterscapes and imagining pathways towards resilient and equitable futures. A key component of the camp was a one-day experiential learning tour to the Ennore–Pulicat wetlands, where participants witnessed first-hand how large-scale development projects often emerge at the cost of fragile ecosystems and vulnerable communities. The camp created a reflective space for participants to question prevailing narratives of development and collectively reimagine alternative futures grounded in justice and sustainability.



A Month of celebrating ecology and communities

Aram Thinaï and DakshinaChitra collaboratively observed the month of June as Environment Action Month, creating a platform for eco-enthusiasts to explore the deep interconnections between environment and culture. The initiative brought together diverse voices through a series of exhibitions, interactive sessions, and workshops, encouraging participants to engage with environmental concerns not just from a scientific or policy perspective, but through the lens of lived experiences and traditional knowledge. The events aimed to inspire awareness, reflection, and sustainable action rooted in cultural context.

June 5, observed globally as World Environment Day, often emphasizes pressing concerns such as climate change, carbon emissions, and ecological degradation. While these global narratives are vital, the Indian context offers a unique perspective where nature is not a separate entity but is woven into daily life, traditions, and livelihoods. Environment Action Month served as a reminder of this intrinsic relationship, offering a meaningful opportunity for communities to reconnect with traditional practices and ecological wisdom that have long supported harmonious living with nature.

Calendar of Events				
No:	Date	Name of the Event	Duration	Facilitator
1	01/06/25	Ghosts, Monsters and Dreams, An Art Exhibition - Inauguration	1 month	-
2	01/06/25	Buried under Chennai's Waste, An Photo Exhibition - Inauguration	1 month	-
3	08/06/25	Coastal Ecology and Journaling Workshop	3 Hours	Aswathi Asokan, Nature Educator
4	14/06/25	Limewash Painting Workshop	2 Hours	Mugdha Chavan, Artist
5	22/06/25	Masterclass in Vernacular Architecture	7 Hours	Ar. Krithika Venkatesh & Team



Stories that travel

Aram Thinai Podcast

The Aram Thinai Podcast is a Tamil-language platform that explores climate change through the lived experiences of common people and nature-dependent communities, foregrounding voices that are often underrepresented in mainstream discourse. Rooted in a conversational and accessible format, the podcast brings together grassroots stories of resilience, adaptation, and endurance, while also engaging with deeper, nuanced perspectives on environmental change, livelihoods, and justice. By weaving together personal narratives, local knowledge systems, and critical reflections, the podcast creates a space for dialogue that connects everyday realities with larger ecological questions, encouraging listeners to better understand and respond to the challenges of a changing climate.

Subscribers: 389 | Views: 31,182
Episodes: 37 | Reels: 34

Frames from the Field

Frames from the Field is an initiative dedicated to documenting and amplifying the lived experiences, knowledge systems, and everyday realities of people—particularly those from nature-dependent communities whose lives are closely intertwined with shifting ecologies. Through carefully curated photo essays and narrative articles, the platform explores the intersections of land, life, and livelihood, bringing an eco-social lens to stories that are often overlooked.



TAP TO LISTEN
PODCAST



Aram Thinai Podcast



OTHER WORKS

Report on “Dry land agriculture and farmers in Tamil Nadu: Challenges and Directions”

Karthik, Aram Thinai's co-founder documented the status of dry land agriculture in Tamil Nadu, issues faced by the farmers, impact of climate change, the success models developed by farmers and recommendations to the government. The final report “Dry land agriculture and farmers in Tamil Nadu: Challenges and Directions” was drafted as part of the Inlaks Shivdasani Fellowship for social engagement. He also published 3 long form articles as part of the fellowship.

[TAP TO READ DETAILED REPORT](#)

Pugai Padam | Art Exhibition

The Art Exhibition titled “Pugai Padam” was a powerful and thought-provoking initiative that illuminated people's lived experiences of air pollution in Chennai city. The artworks were uniquely created using the concept of smog collectors—glass plates installed across 14 different locations in the city, where Chennai's airborne dust was allowed to settle naturally over time. Stencils placed on these plates transformed the accumulated pollution into visual narratives. Alongside these pieces, community experiences from each location were carefully documented and presented, grounding the art in lived realities. Conducted by the Pugaipadam Collective, of which Aram Thinai is a part, the exhibition stood as both an artistic expression and a collective call to acknowledge, confront, and act upon the urgent issue of air pollution.



TESTIMONIALS



Last November, I went on a wetland tour organised by Aram Thinaï, an experience that completely reshaped how I saw lakes and waterbodies. It inspired me to embark on a series of articles exploring the Pallikaranai watershed. Since January, I have covered around six lakes as part of this ongoing series in Citizen Matters and recently we at Oorvani Foundation put together our learnings through a masterclass on Chennai lakes.

from Shobhana Radhakrishnan, Journalist

We met an uncle from a settlement who is facing eviction threats often, the whole idea of being a part of the community museum project which is going to be helpful to these communities makes me happy.

from student of Chirpi Global School

The Rethinking Development workshop and wetland tour gave me a deeper understanding of urban and ecological issues. The experience strongly influenced my application for the Masters in Urban Studies programme at the IIHS, Bangalore where I mentioned it in my essays and interviews. I'm grateful for the learning and exposure the programme offered.

from a student of IIHS

I am delighted to engage with Aram Thinaï, an organization rooted in values and social good. Through Aram Thinaï, I have been part of promoting "Weekend Vivasayi" — a lifestyle-based farming initiative. Beyond agriculture, the organization actively works in ecology, agri-tourism, livelihood development for local communities, and the revival of traditional local food systems and practices. Aram Thinaï also supports organic farmers like me by organizing a monthly market in Chennai, creating a successful platform for organic farmers and value-added natural food producers. More than an economic opportunity, it helps bring healthy, chemical-free food to people and builds a healthier environment.

I am truly happy to continue this journey with Aram Thinaï.

from Ruthren, Organic Farmer

RECOGNITION

TEDx NAPIER BRIDGE 2025

The Co-founders, Karthik and Benisha had delivered a podcast style talk on the topic on “Rethinking Development” at the TEDx NapierBridge Countdown 2025 event on 24th August, 2025. The talk started with a virtual tour to pollution impacted areas in the northern side of Chennai, followed by interrogating the current model of development and concluded with prospect directions to reimagine our collective futures. It was an enriching experience of being in a stage where some of the best thinkers and doers have presented their ideas.



CHANGELOOMS- Youth Leaders in Climate Action | Cohort 4

Aram Thinaï has been selected for the Cohort 4 of Changelooms-Youth Leaders in Climate Action (CL-YLCA) program, a national level youth leadership program organised by Commutiny and Varta Leap. We participated in the week-long Window to Changelooms engagement program at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi and an 8 day Development Centre Engagement in Jaipur. It was an immersive experience of exploring self, organisation and community along with 13 other civil society organisations from across the country.



OUR TEAM

Collective behind the work



BENISHA B M
Founding Trustee

Project Manager- Chennai Wetlands
Project



KARTHIK G
Managing Trustee

Project Manager- Chennai Foodscape
Project



VISHAL NATH L
Trustee



RAJU K
Consultant Researcher,
Chennai Wetlands Project



SUBHASHINI K
Consultant Educator
Youth and Civic Engagement

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS



TNIUK



ARISE



DakshinaChitra



Youth Climate Centre



Uvakai Foundation



IRCUDC



Vettiver Collective



Wellbeing Alliance

Times of India on ARAM THINAI PODCAST

Podcast discusses climate change for ordinary people

Manasa Vijayalakshmi V

Chennai: Enduring unusually high rains and consequent floods and extended summer heat waves, what is climate change from the perspective of ordinary people? A podcast series in Tamil delves into the grassroots stories of such people's resilience, inspiration, and endurance, offering their nuanced perspectives. Two young eco-social changemakers, Karthik G and Benisha Maggie, are behind the podcast which attempts to catalyse a change around climate change and social justice.

Karthik, an engineer from NIT Trichy collaborates with organic farmers and serves as a coordinator for the Tamil Nadu Iyarkai Velan Kootamappu. "As we began working on climate change, we noticed a notable absence of discussions on its impact at grassroots level, such as marginalised farmers and fishermen. Existing information tended to focus primarily on a macro level. Our goal was to provide a localised perspective based on our own experiences and learning," said Karthik. Benisha, a graphic designer with a background in architecture, has been actively involved in social work since her college days. She designs Aram Thina's posters. "I thought using



BID TO CATALYSE CHANGE

art as a means of communication can create a better impact," she said.

Sharing what inspired the initiative, Karthik said, "During the floods, I worked in both north and South Chennai. In many places such as Vyasarpadi, Ennore or Athipattu, it took longer for rainwater to drain. In the summer, people such as farmers, auto drivers and fisherfolk toil under the sun. They don't have the privilege of salaried employees who can work from home or from the luxury of office."

Benisha said they want to attract a large group of young audience and prod them to participate in a social cause in any capacity possible. "Individuals can raise voice against systemic changes in favour of marginalised communities affected by climate change. They can take personal steps in terms of consumption and lifestyle," said Karthik.

The New Indian Express on ARAM THINAI PODCAST

Tune in to the trying tales of climate change

RESHMA MUTHUKUMAR

A cyclone every year, scorching heat waves, unseasonal rains, a dip in groundwater level — climate change's effects on the world is evident. While it has been spoken about, and measures are being advised to curb it, there is one area of climate change that remains unexplored — what it does at the grassroots level of society and how this impacts the livelihoods of people. Karthik G and Benisha MM, two eco-social activists and members of the Chennai Climate Action Group (CCAG), have taken this as the topic of their podcast, Aram Thina (meaning, ethical landlifers in Tamil) to create awareness among people. Launched on May 10, the podcast aims to communicate to the public about the connection between climate crisis and economic inequalities and to discuss mitigation measures people make to keep their livelihoods resilient.

"Communicating on this aspect of climate change is the need of the hour and podcasts are a go-to medium to reach out to more people and give a better direction to work on this issue. Aram Thina will be a bi-monthly podcast, releasing one episode every two weeks for 15-16 minutes each," says Benisha, who predominantly works on pollution impacted communities and how gender, caste, and class of people make them experience climate change differently in their lives. The topic for the first episode was localised climate resilience, which is a pathway for climate action based on the local landscape, community needs of the local livelihoods, their local wisdom about the natural resources found there, and how all this is related to the growth of the local economy.

Keeping in constant touch with the topic, the script is written by both Benisha and Karthik and the episodes are recorded and edited at Benisha's house. "The jingles were composed by our friend, Sound Mani who plays more than 50 traditional instruments to give a flavour of an announcement on something important," she adds.

We had to unlearn a lot of things and learn many new things about our environment and how different strata of our society are being impacted

Benisha MM



There is not much data about how the livelihoods of people and their lifestyles are related to climate change. So, we both travelled across Tamil Nadu.

Karthik G

Choosing the spotlight

The duo comes from different educational backgrounds. While Benisha is an architect, Karthik is an NIT graduate who is working in the Tamil Nadu Organic Agricultural Collective promoting organic farming. During their college days, they began working on climate change initiatives, and found what they had studied in school was different from what happens at the grassroots level. "Initially, we had to unlearn a lot of things and learn many new things about our environment and how different strata of our society are being im-

posed in different ranges," says Benisha, while Karthik explains, "There is a lot of information on how climate change is impacting the Amazon forests, ice caps melting in Antarctica, heat waves, etc. But there is not much data about how the livelihoods of people and their lifestyles are related to climate change. So, to bring focus on this, we both travelled across Tamil Nadu and met many farmers, handcraft artisans, fisher persons, forest dwellers, and tribal communities."

Little changes in the climate can create big impacts. This year, the winds during the flowering months such as January and February had caused a lot of flowers from the mango trees to fall off, resulting in a lesser yield of mangoes in Tamil Nadu. Unseasonal rain during the harvest season in January in Thiruvallur district led to the destruction of crops. "It was not rain that could cause flooding for a week, but a small rain at the wrong time," notes Karthik. "Our upcoming episodes will share many grassroots stories from different livelihoods. It will be carried out in a conversational way where each of us will take turns to question each other and explain with our nuanced perspectives," he adds. There is no single solution to climate change; by giving a direction towards attaining a solution with a shift in perspective towards those who are the most vulnerable because of climate change, will make people know what it is doing in our daily lives. The duo believes that to work on climate change issues, and they need a lot of people to come forward and join initiatives on environmental degradation, and climate change and contribute by doing something they can on this issue. "Consuming consciously and asking questions like, what is behind this activity? Does this act cause any harm to the environment? Where did this product come from? Is it really benefiting the producer or are the middlemen benefiting more? can make us aware of what is happening to our environment," signs off Benisha. Aram Thina is available on Spotify.

Citizen Matters on WETLAND TOUR

CITIZEN MATTERS

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Chennai

Flooded lands, disappearing birds: Pallikaranai wetland tour highlights impact of shrinking lakes

by Shobana Radhakrishnan

November 8, 2024

Environment

A vital wetland, Pallikaranai has shrunk drastically due to urbanisation, threatening biodiversity and vulnerable communities in Chennai.



Wetland tour organised by Aram Thina. Pic: Shobana Radhakrishnan

Times of India on EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TOURS

This tour of Chennai is about what we are doing wrong with our environment

Manasa Ahmed@timesofindia.com

The Pallikarnai watershed complex in Chennai is an area under ecological threat. Now, a climate activist group based in the city is trying to pull back the curtain on this environmental disaster through immersive eco tours.

"We're hoping that creating more awareness will help," says Karthik G, an organic farming and livelihoods advocate, who founded Aram Thina, which offers guided tours of the city's critical ecological zones and rural communities.

"We want to show people the destruction of wetlands and the loss of nature-based livelihoods," he says.

The "wetland tour" takes participants in a van to make it accessible for all through key waterbodies including three to four lakes, the Pallikarnai marshland, and Buckingham Canal. The idea, says the organisers, is to demonstrate how unchecked urban expansion and IT sector developments along OMR in Chennai have led to massive encroachments, says co-founder Benisha MM.

"We work on preserving nature-based livelihoods and collaborate with farmers, fishers, palm tree climbers, handcraft workers, stum dwellers and marginalised communities facing caste and gender-based discrimination. We want to show people how these groups not only rely on nature but also do their bit to preserve it."

The tour also delves into the socio-political consequences of these changes. "In the name of flood mitigation, marginalised communities have been evicted and relocated to areas like Perumbalkam, which, ironically, also face flooding," says Karthik.

The livelihood tour focuses on nature-based jobs that sustain peri-urban communities on the outskirts of Chennai. Participants visit organic farms, eco-construction sites and fishing villages to witness how traditional livelihoods are being threatened by industrialisation, pollution, and climate change.

The beautification of beaches has displaced fishing communities, while industrial pollution has affected marine life," says Karthik. "People need to understand that IT is not the only source of income in Chennai; rural livelihoods are as important."

The group conducts these tours once a month. "We hope these experiences will make people more conscious of their consumption patterns and their role in shaping a sustainable future," says Karthik.

Activism tourism seems to be picking up in the city of late. At the Chennai Book Fair in Jan, reading group "Read Will Rise" hosted guided tours of literature by Periyar Ambudkar and Karl Marx. Several youngsters and students have been showing interest in learning about leftist thought leaders, but don't know where to begin, says Ilanandhan R, coordinator.

DT Next on Environment Action Month



Chennai

Chennai: Art, sustainability & tradition come together at 'Environment Action' month

Running throughout June, the art exhibition

Ghosts, Monsters, and Dreams explores themes of urban ecology, environmental imagination, and the hidden narratives of our cityscapes



DTNEXT Bureau

Updated on: 04 Jun 2025, 6:00 am

The Hindu on ENVIRONMENT ACTION MONTH

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EQ

Lending an artistic touch to the lives of common people

Updated - June 02, 2025 01:21 pm IST - CHENNAI

THE HINDU BUREAU



People visiting the art exhibition at Dakshinachitra in Muttukadu on Sunday. | Photo Credit: AKHILA EASWARAN

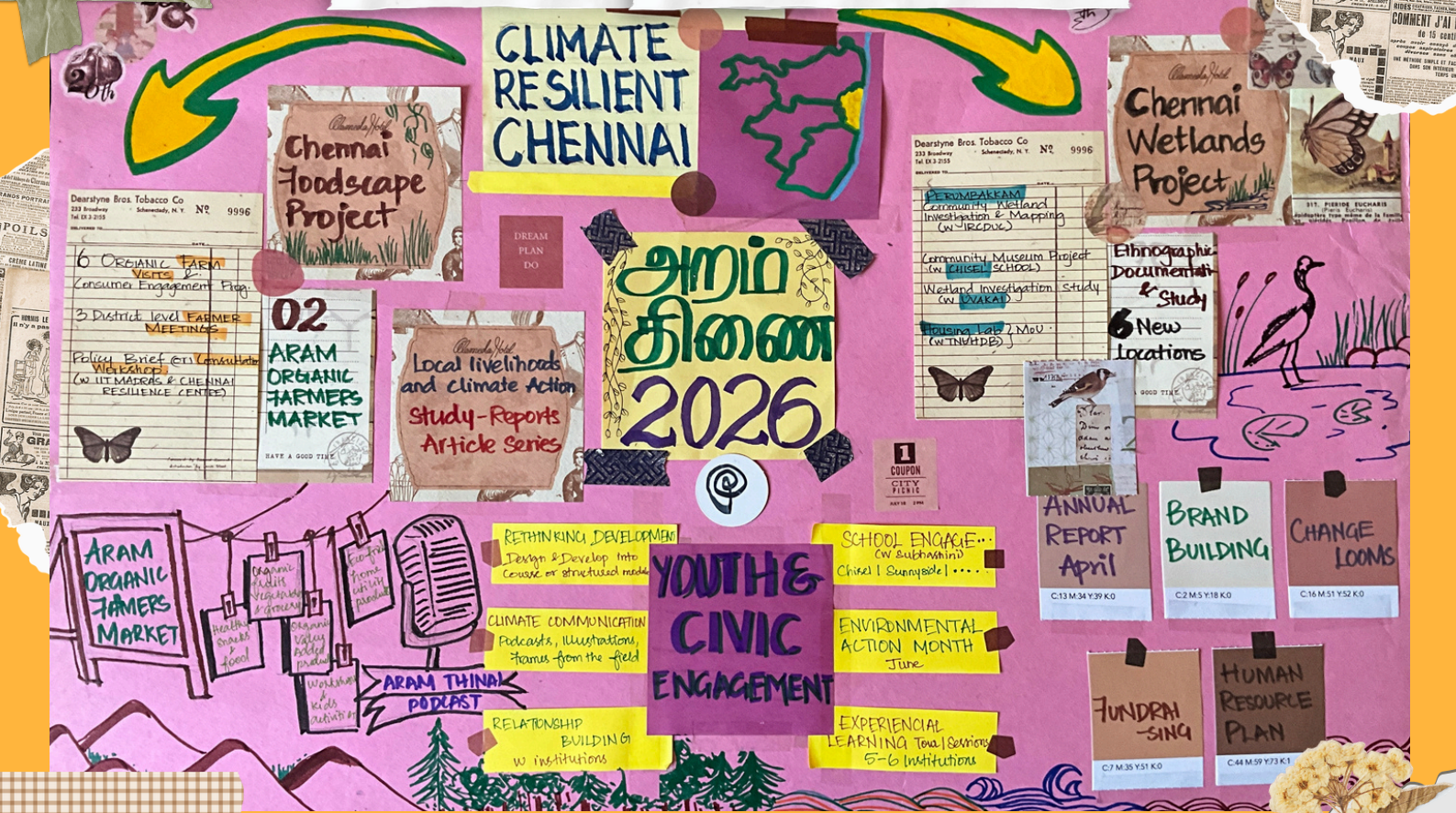
Inspired by the tales of ordinary people such as a farmer who lost his land to a thermal power station, a home maker who loves shell fish from the Ennore Creek, and a seashell picker who struggles to make ends meet, students of the Government College of Fine Arts have drawn sketches and made collages that are among an array of works on display at Dakshinachitra at Muttukadu as part of the Environment Action Month.

IN THE MEDIA

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Opening Balance	1,00,000 INR
Income	3,02,000.9 INR
Donations	2,26,550.9 INR
Service Income	75,450 INR
Expenses	2,68,783.37 INR
Closing Balance	1,33,217.37 INR

OUR VISION FOR 2026



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