



 pudiyador times

63RD EDITION  
JAN-MAR  
2026



# The President's Message

Dear Pudiyaador family,

We've been in this together for almost twenty-five years, dreaming, learning, and growing together in a constantly changing landscape. This milestone feels like a beautiful full circle, and I'm thrilled that we can all share in it.

Despite how old we are, this quarter like all others was packed with many firsts. Moments where our community chose to step out of their comfort zones. The thrill of our youngest children's first English music performance. The courage of young boys questioning household norms and advocating for their mothers. And across rural India, our Playquity women's teams confidently stepping onto a national-level sports field and into the streets performing plays that spoke against gender-based discriminations.

As you turn these pages, we invite you to celebrate these full circles and brave firsts with us. And if you recently experienced or observed a "brave first" you are proud of, we'd love for you to write back and share it with us.

With love,  
Swapnaa





# ABOUT PUDIYADOR

Pudiyador ("anew" in Tamil) is a community-based educational organization that caters to marginalised communities across India. Our goal is to enable all children, women and communities to act as engines of their own empowerment through access to relevant education, quality healthcare, and meaningful employment. Through our six programs, we operate using a cradle-to-college-to-community approach, supporting individuals at every stage of their development.

CRADLE → COLLEGE → COMMUNITY

## IN THIS EDITION



WATCH FOR  
PROGRAM ICONS  
TO DISCOVER  
WHAT HAPPENED  
IN EACH  
PROGRAM.

# PUDIYADOR-WIDE HIGHLIGHTS

## SWEET PONGAL, SHIFTING NORMS

At the start of each year, we celebrate *Pongal* (Tamil harvest festival celebrating gratitude to nature, the sun, and farmers) alongside the communities we serve, a tradition that beautifully sets the tone for the months ahead. Celebrating under the theme "*Samathuva Pongal*" (Universal or Equity Pongal), we use this opportunity to talk about inclusion and break down social barriers. This year, the celebration was extra special as our youth took center stage, officially launching their own theater team, "*Vina Nadaga Kuzhu*" (a theater group that questions). The early teens performed a skit to help parents talk about reducing children's screen time.



Along with *parai* (traditional drum performance), *oyilattam* (traditional folk dance), and *silambam* (an ancient martial art style from Tamil Nadu), this year saw many firsts. In one of our communities, our young students confidently took the stage for an English drama and a beautiful song accompanied by the keyboard, both marking proud first-time performances. The festival also brought inspiring shifts to our neighborhoods; we watched our women reclaim public spaces by dancing openly in a traditional *Gummi* (a South Indian folk dance) circle, while a young male volunteer broke old norms by joining the women's winning *kolam* (intricate floor art made with rice flour) team.





# PUDIYADOR-WIDE HIGHLIGHTS

## A DAY FOR OUR EDUCATORS

In January, we also celebrate Teacher's Day to honor the birth anniversary (January 3rd) of Savitribai Phule, the first female teacher of India. It is a day specifically chosen to recognize the educators who power our programs. This year, the celebration took a new format at a resort in Thiruvallur. The event was about acknowledging their individual contributions and giving them a space to rest and bond. The day was made even more special by the presence of Chennai-based writer Deepa Lakshmi, whose book on social and gender issues, *"Kuthama Sollala Kunamave Soldrom,"* (Not to blame, but to heal) our teachers had read last year; moved by its themes, they brought its ideas to life through two dramas and engaged in a thoughtful conversation with her about women's oppression and deep-rooted societal biases.



## WOMEN'S DAY 2026

We were just 20 minutes into our session when one Akka quipped, "It has been a long while since I laughed from my heart, can you please organize more sessions like this?" For almost all the women in the community that we work with, even getting an hour off for themselves is not allowed. And so, whenever it is around Women's Day, we make sure everything we do to celebrate is centered around the women: making her feel special, while also sharing with them the history of how the day came to be, and the need for a woman to be empowered. In addition to a few craft and game sessions, we ended the day with a simple pledge, a commitment to work towards being better, mentally, physically, and emotionally.





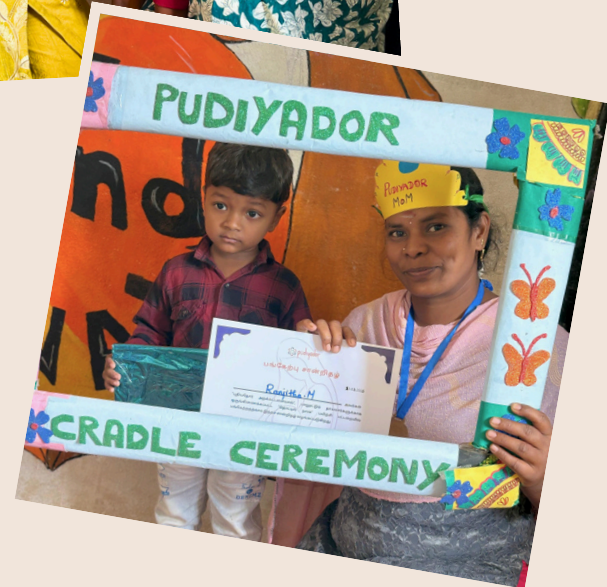
# CRADLE HEALTH

*A program for expectant/new mothers and their infants*



## MOMS GRADUATE

In our work with communities in Chennai, we see how often mothers are burdened by guilt and the overwhelming shift in their lives, especially when they are disadvantaged. Since 2019, our Cradle Health Program has supported over 160 women through this transition with mental health support, knowledge, and nutrition. This February, six mothers graduated from the program with a deep understanding of the health and care topics we covered. We are especially proud that these graduates are now becoming resource persons for the next batch. We believe this is the best way to grow, when mothers who have walked the path stay to guide the next batch, keeping the support sustainable in the community.



## MOTHERS LEADING MOTHERS

In the same month, we saw the cycle come full circle. One of our own Cradle program mothers took the lead, facilitating a session on infant handling and care for the next group. The session focused on the delicate balance of infant care and self-care.



She guided the mothers through simple developmental activities and positive parenting practices, like supporting milestones and child safety. There was emphasis on encouraging a child's independence, through activities like self-feeding and dressing and the importance of using gentle communication instead of scolding. Sessions like this one are vital to the women we work with because their exposure to these kinds of conversations and learning is often limited.



# CRADLE HEALTH

*A program for expectant/new mothers and their infants*



## A SPACE TO LET GO

Mental health is an important topic of discussion, especially for mothers balancing heavy self-expectations with caregiving. In March, we held a session titled “Regrets and Letting Go.” We asked twelve mothers to sit and do something they rarely get the chance to do: write a letter to themselves. In these letters, they expressed feelings they had long carried in silence, acknowledging past burdens and identifying what they finally wanted to release. This was a simple activity but many mothers shared how it allowed them to practice self-forgiveness for the first time. Through year-round conversations and the support from volunteers and mental-health experts we try our best to ensure the mothers from the program feel seen and supported.





# SCHOOL BRIDGE

*For our toddlers between ages 3-5 years*



## PARENTS AS PARTNERS

In the School Bridge Program, we have slowly been seeing parents buy into our conversations about the importance of parental involvement in early childhood learning. To build their confidence and provide first-hand exposure, we invited parents to lead classroom activities, starting with storytelling and rhymes. A significant win was when one of our parents volunteered to lead a session on fine motor skills. We were really happy witnessing this scene, as a parent took ownership to teach and be involved. Getting the community involved in the learning of its young ones is something we have been attempting since the start of Pudiyaador and days like these move us closer to our goal.



## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Language development for 3 to 5-year-olds happens best when they feel safe and excited to express themselves. In one storytelling session, the room came to life as the little ones put on animal masks, stepping out of their shells to become the characters in the story. For these toddlers, who often come from homes where both parents work long hours and focused attention is a luxury, this kind of play isn't a regular activity. Seeing a quiet child suddenly roar like a lion or chatter like a monkey is more than just fun; it is intentional work. We have seen how honing their voices through these early years is extremely important as they move up the ladders of learning.





# CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

*For children between 5-10 years*



## BECOMING THE STORYTELLER

As a continuation of our efforts to help children through storytelling, we organized a special workshop led by our volunteer, Kumarshaw. The session was tailored for students from the Children's Program. Rather than just listening to a tale, the children went behind the scenes to learn how to develop their own stories and how to present them confidently to an audience. Over the course of a year, we have multiple events that enable the children to showcase their talents. Most recently, we have seen how students of this cohort are becoming more confident on stage and more expressive in their daily lives.



## ALIGNING HOME AND CLASSROOM

We invited parents of children aged 5-10 to start a conversation at the parent-teacher meeting on the theme, "Why shouldn't you compare your child to others?" Led by our teachers at the Besant Nagar zone of operation, the session helped parents understand the negative impact that comparison can have on a young child's development and self-esteem. It was an interactive space where parents openly shared their personal thoughts, asked questions, and worked through their doubts together with the teachers. To ensure the conversation translated into daily practice, the teachers concluded the meeting by sharing simple, home-based activities for parents to follow with their children.

# EARLY TEENS PROGRAM

For our teenagers between 11-14 years



## STORIES WRITTEN IN DUST

In February, our teens visited a unique art exhibition by the *Pugai Padam Collective* (a coalition of youth groups and art activists from Chennai), where all the displays were created using items that were either pollutants or physically marked by pollution. The exhibition, '*Maasu Kadhaigal*' (Pollution Stories), featured plays performed by youth from North Chennai who shared their lived experiences with air pollution. Alongside these impacting performances, the exhibition displayed children's uniforms and medical records from families in Ennore area, documenting the reality of respiratory ailments and wheezing issues caused by pollution. The experience was eye-opening. Our teens saw firsthand how art can be used to spotlight urgent community issues, bringing up questions within the group about environmental justice.



## A SEASON OF FIRSTS

Building on our commitment to expose our teens to different art forms and experiences laden with an understanding of responsibility to the society around us, we organized two outings in February. At *Kalai Kadhambam*, an event showcasing traditional art forms, our teens were exposed to the richness of Tamil folk arts, many of which they had never seen before. We also took the group to the annual Turtle Walk conducted by Students Sea Turtle Conservation Network [SSTCN] to help conserve sea turtles along the midnight shoreline. It was a long 8 km walk by the beach, and while most of the night was quiet, they were rewarded toward the end with the sight of a fresh nest with over a 100 turtle eggs. Despite it being a long night, the teens enjoyed the experience as it was one of the "firsts."





# EARLY TEENS PROGRAM

For our teenagers between 11-14 years



## CHANGING PERSPECTIVES



For the third year running, the Early Teens Program celebrated International Women's Day with a specific goal: sensitizing our young men to the importance of Women's Rights. We hosted a two-day event that moved beyond just "celebrating" to questioning the status quo. We began by screening the film *"Aan Paavam Polladhadhu"* (a movie about a middle class husband who struggles to accept his wife's modern, progressive attitudes.), which made room for an intense debate among the boys regarding gender stereotypes and the harmful culture of victim-blaming.

To ground these big ideas in reality, the teens conducted an "Inequality Survey," interviewing their own fathers and mothers. Comparing the responses opened their eyes to the inequalities that still persist in their own homes. We also introduced the story of Malala Yousafzai, using her journey to discuss why the fight for education and rights remains so urgent. The highlight of this year's event was the teens understanding that their mums need "me-time" to unwind, and coming up with simple ways that they can help with that too.



# YOUTH ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM

For our teenagers between 15-19 years



## NEW EXPRESSIONS

It was the vision of Pudiyador's founder, Prof. Narayanan, to imagine a future where music could be accessible to people from any background. Twenty-five years on, we are still on that path, enabling our youth to step closer to opportunities that once felt out of reach. This year, volunteer John Dhayanithi brought that vision to life by introducing our young adults to the keyboard. Conducting consistent weekly classes over three months, John shared: *"Teaching children music has always been one of my dreams. Kids are eager to learn and I'll give my best!"* The culmination of this effort was a beautiful keyboard performance accompanying a song by our young students at the Pongal celebrations in January.



Alongside music, our youth have been breaking barriers in language. English proficiency remains a systemic hurdle that often hinders the professional growth of students from vulnerable sectors as they transition to college. To bridge this gap, volunteer Julianna Catherine Veronica has been coaching spoken English for our 10th, 11th, and 12th-standard students. Julianna describes their weekly sessions as *"an explosion of energy, interest, and talent,"* where the youth come eager to learn. This hard work took center stage during our community Pongal celebrations, where the students performed a short English skit. Learning their dialogues in less than three weeks, their performance was a proud moment for their families and to us who witnessed our youth open up entirely new worlds of expression.





# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

*Our women empowerment program*



## BRIDGING THE GAP TO BENEFITS

Through the women's program, we try all that we can to help women be financially independent, safe, and empowered to make decisions on their own. This often starts with navigating the systems built to support them. In February, eight women from our Ramapuram community sat with the FEMA (Foundation for Friendly Environment and Medical Awareness) team to understand various government schemes and the application process in detail. This learning turned into immediate action in March, where we facilitated registrations for accident insurance, health insurance and government housing schemes. While many registered successfully, some lacked income certificates and requested help. Many women and community-members thanked us for the clarity, and for securing these safety nets for their homes.



## DREAMING OF BUSINESS

In February, we organized a Small-Scale Business Guidance Workshop for the women. The session was led by Ms. Amritha from the Rhapsodeed organization, who walked the group through the essential first steps of starting a business. She explained the practicalities of how to get a loan and the details of how to sell and market products effectively. She spent time talking with the women about the specific businesses they were planning to start, offering tailored suggestions and fresh ideas to help them move forward. It was a huge learning session for our women, moving them beyond just learning a skill and toward the confidence of supporting their families.



# PLAYQUITY

*Building equity through play by inverting gender roles*



## NEW PLAYS

In January, Playquity partner Muskaan hosted a tournament with fifteen teams in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Three women's teams, curated under Playquity's leadership, stepped onto the field to compete. For many of our girls, this was their first time playing at this level at a tournament, and this exposure helped them showcase their frisbee skills and play with grit. These opportunities pave the way for some to shine and for some to understand their strength. For others, it is simply about the experience of being present in a new field. These stages, big and small, help our young women from rural backgrounds build the confidence to face new challenges in life and beyond.



## SPEAKING UP

Playquity is now in its fifth year, and we are seeing it grow into deeper levels every day. Take our cohort in Anjani, Rajasthan, for instance. In villages where gender roles are reinforced by years of conditioning, change usually moves slowly. But on January 26th, India's Republic Day, the girls made a statement. They took the stage in their community event to perform a street play, exposing the gender discrimination that defines their lives. To speak so openly on such a significant day was huge. It showed that the conversations we start during Playquity's life-skill sessions aren't just staying within the group, they are giving the girls the courage to challenge the status quo in the heart of their community.





# PLAYQUITY

*Building equity through play by inverting gender roles*



## WHEN FAMILIES BEGIN TO BELIEVE

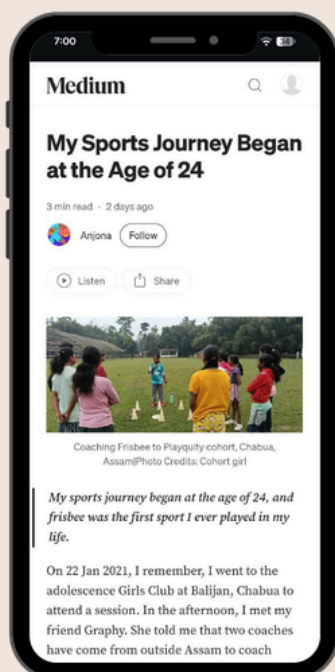
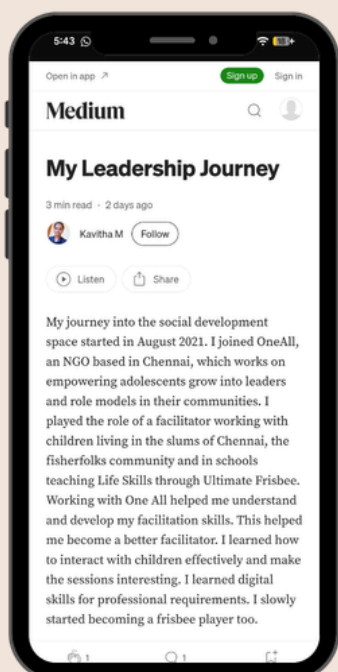
Field visits form an important part of our work, as they help the Playquity operations team look closely at how change is taking root. And the trip in March, to Madhya Pradesh with our partner Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS) was special. While the Playquity team spent time discussing safety, nutrition, and the importance of creating open spaces for girls to grow, one conversation stayed with us. The father of one of the girls shared something simple: he now sees the need for a girl to step outside her home and explore rather than being restricted. It meant so much to us because this is exactly what we have been aiming for, to use play as a way to bring about true equity, starting right at home.



## WRITING NEW NARRATIVES

We believe that language is a key that opens doors. For nearly two years, we've worked with dedicated volunteers to teach English to our coaches, meeting each of them at their own level. In one of our advanced sessions, under the guidance of AIF Banyan Impact Fellow Henna, our senior coaches, Anjona, a native Hindi speaker, and Kavitha, a native Tamil speaker were given a challenge: to write their stories. For them, choosing to write in English wasn't easy but they gave it a go. Knowing them and seeing their blogs coming to life is a beautiful testament to the spirit they carry. We invite you to read their journeys, in their own words, at the link below.

<https://sites.google.com/playquity.org/home/blog>



# TEACHER TRAINING

*Our training program for teachers from all programs*



## EQUIPPING OUR TEACHERS

This time around, training for teachers centered on deepening their understanding of both the emotional well-being of the children and the environmental health of their surroundings. In January, we held zone-wise sessions focused on the topic, "Why shouldn't you compare your child to others?". These discussions helped our teachers recognize the negative impact comparison has on a child's self-esteem. It also equipped them with the right language to discuss this sensitive subject with parents, ensuring a more supportive environment at home.



Our teachers Roshni and Raksha participated in a wetland field tour supported by Poovulagu Nanbargal (an environmental organization). By stepping out into the field alongside our Early Teens Program (ETP) students, they gained firsthand knowledge about wetlands and environmental conservation. Through these continued conversations and exposure with our teachers, we make sure to address the most pressing needs across all our programs, helping closing gaps helping close the gaps in both awareness and action.





# Pudhiyadhur Charitable Trust

## Projected Budget - 2026

Projected Budget for 2026 - 78.00 Lakh INR / 80,561 USD



### Quarter 1 : Jan-Mar

Projected amount to be raised:  
20.00 Lakh INR / 20,651 USD

### As of Mar 31, 2025

Total amount raised:  
28.24 Lakh INR / 29,165 USD



### Quarter 2: Apr-Jun

Projected amount to be raised:  
18.00 Lakh INR / 20,422 USD

# BE A PART OF THE CHANGE



*From one story to many – help us write the next chapter*

## DONATE



Your contributions keep Pudiyaador's work going—whether it's rations for families, salaries for community teachers, or programs for kids, youth, and women.

<https://www.pudiyador.org/donate>

## VOLUNTEER



Share your time and skills with our children—teach, mentor, or just connect. In-person or online, your presence makes a difference!

[www.pudiyador.org/volunteer](http://www.pudiyador.org/volunteer)

## FOLLOW



[www.pudiyador.org](http://www.pudiyador.org)

## CONNECT



Know an NGO, company, or institution that shares our vision? Introduce us—we'd love to collaborate and grow together.

[info@pudiyador.org](mailto:info@pudiyador.org)