

Classrooms for Coexistence

Background

Children today are growing up increasingly disconnected from nature, with fewer opportunities to learn about wildlife in meaningful ways. At the same time, they are future decision-makers and community influencers who can help shape more positive attitudes toward the natural world. Building awareness and understanding at an early age is therefore essential for fostering responsible behaviour and promoting coexistence.

The Classrooms for Coexistence programme was developed by the Zoo Outreach Organisation, with support from Coromandel International Limited, to address this gap. The program introduces school children to the idea that wildlife is an integral part of our shared environment and that safe and respectful coexistence is possible. Through engaging educational materials, activities, and discussions, the initiative aims to replace fear with knowledge, encourage empathy for wildlife, and empower students to become ambassadors for coexistence in their communities.

Activities conducted during the reporting period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

As part of the awareness initiative, 11 school awareness programmes were conducted in October 2025, with follow-up activities carried out in February 2026.

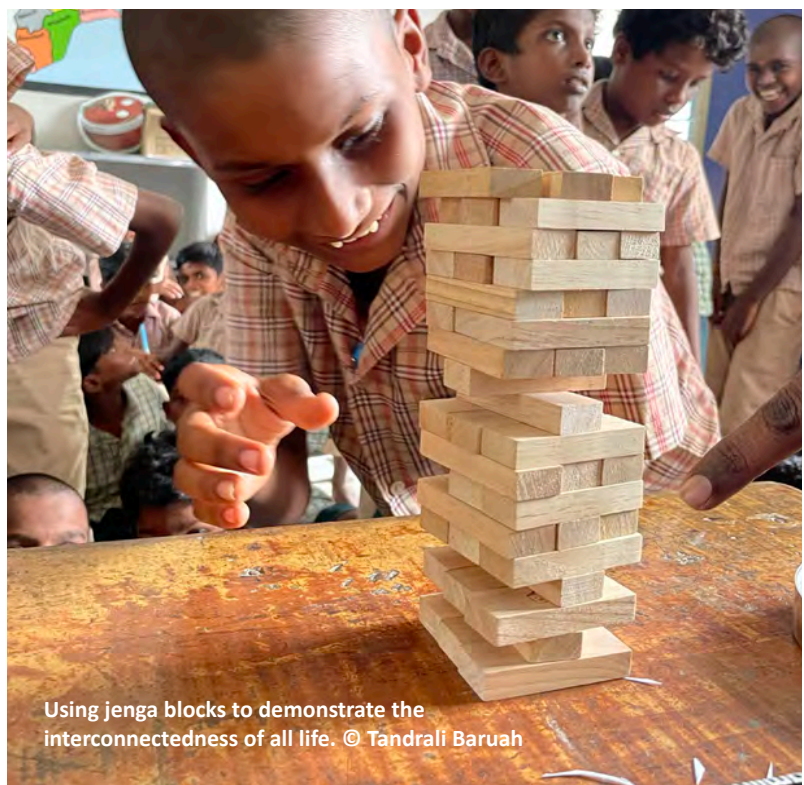
Key Achievements and Outcomes

Increased awareness among students about daily-life wildlife, including insects, amphibians, reptiles, and birds commonly found around homes and schools.

- 🦋 Students demonstrated improved observation skills, sharing real-life wildlife encounters and environmental observations.
- 🦋 Strong engagement from teachers and students, including student-led initiatives such as the ocean conservation drama.
- 🦋 Reinforcement of ecological concepts such as pollination, food chains, habitat loss, adaptation, and ecosystem balance.
- 🦋 Students showed improved understanding of the importance of biodiversity and coexistence with wildlife.

Challenges Faced

- 🦋 Large student numbers in some schools required sessions to be conducted in multiple batches.
- 🦋 Limited infrastructure in certain schools made logistics and classroom management challenging.



Using jenga blocks to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all life. © Tandrili Baruah



The sit and stand assessment method help the team understand the knowledge base of the children. © Payal Molur

- 🐼 Eklavya Residential School, Ooty – 80 students (Grades 6–8)
- 🐼 Government Tribal Residential School, Hasanur, Erode – 50 students
- 🐼 Government High School, Germalam, Erode – 50 students
- 🐼 Vidya Vanam School, Anaikatti, Coimbatore – 65 Kids
- 🐼 Northern Lights academy, Coimbatore – 50 kids

Locations covered:

Coimbatore, Chennai, Cuddalore, Erode, The Nilgiris, Ranipet, districts of Tamil Nadu.

- 🐼 In some cases, teacher participation during sessions was lower than expected.
- 🐼 Weather conditions occasionally forced programme modifications, such as shifting outdoor sessions indoors.

Participant Numbers and Locations

- 🐼 Through these awareness programmes, a total of 751 students from 11 schools were reached.
- 🐼 Panchayat Union Middle School, Thyagavalli, Cuddalore – 30 students
- 🐼 Panchayat Union Middle School, Manthoppu, Cuddalore – 55 students
- 🐼 Government Higher Secondary School, Periyakuppam, Cuddalore – 111 students
- 🐼 Government Higher Secondary School, Ranipet – 100 students
- 🐼 Government ADW Higher Secondary School, Karai, Ranipet – 45 students
- 🐼 Government Higher Secondary School, Kathivakkam, Chennai – 115 students

Key Partnerships and Collaborations

Zoo Outreach Organisation (programme implementation), Coromandel International Limited (programme support), Namma School Namma Ooru Palli (NSNOP), School Education Department, Tamil Nadu, Chief, District, and Block Education Officers, NGC District Coordinators, District Eco club Coordinator, and local education stakeholders Headmaster/ Headmistress and other teachers.



Colour challenge game to help with observation skills in nature. © Koshik Rao



Students showcasing issues that plague the ocean and what should be done to save it through drama.
© Koshik Rao







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Measurable Outcomes

-  Over 750 students directly engaged through workshops and follow-up sessions.
-  Students demonstrated over 80% recall accuracy of ecological concepts in follow-up assessments in some schools.
-  Increased student participation in nature observation activities and wildlife documentation.
-  Several schools requested additional sessions and career guidance programmes related to conservation.

Future Plans / Next Steps

-  Conduct additional follow-up workshops and advanced sessions in participating schools.
-  Develop career guidance sessions on conservation and wildlife biology for interested students.
-  Expand the programme to more schools in rural and tribal regions of Tamil Nadu.

-  Introduce student-led biodiversity observation projects to further strengthen ecological awareness and engagement.

Acknowledgments

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