A brief overview of Auroville’s outreach work

Since the beginning of Auroville, 1250 acres have been forested with approximately 3 million trees. Through various cultural projects, activities, outreach schools, cultural centres and other endeavours, Auroville is actively engaged in 80 villages in the bioregion. Auroville employs approximately 6000 people from the bioregion and offers support in the form of self-help groups and livelihood programs to approximately 90,000 people. It has more than 30 educational and cultural centres in the bioregion, offers 6 health facilities that see approximately 6000 patients annually, has constituted more than 350 self-help groups in the bioregion with approximately 6000 members. 30 countries and 14 states in India have major appropriate technology projects that have either been initiated by or are managed by Auroville. In Tamil Nadu itself, Auroville has 25 major projects.

All of Auroville’s activities are registered under several Trusts, under the Auroville Foundation. One of the umbrella organisation that also largely focusses on cultural and educational initiatives in and around Auroville is the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research (SAIIER). It supports 10 educational organisations inside Auroville and 11 cultural centres and outreach schools, as well as an educational platform for solid waste management throughout India. Another Trust that focusses on outreach work is the Auroville Village Action Trust.

Below a short overview of some of the outreach that operate in and around Auroville.

Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research

(SAIIER)

SAIIER promotes and coordinates most of the educational and cultural programmes in Auroville, keeping them focused on Auroville’s aims and ideals. The Institute also acts as a financial and administrative umbrella for all these programmes. It receives funding for this purpose from India’s Ministry of Education, the Foundation for World Education (USA), Stichting De Zaaier (The Netherlands), and various units and individuals from within and outside Auroville.

http://www.auroville.org/contents/521
Auroville Village Action Group

AVAG is an NGO that reaches out to 90,000 local villagers in the Bio-region. The core mission of AVAG is to partner in a process of integral development with all the local village communities surrounding Auroville with particular emphasis on facilitating community solidarity, fostering capacity for self-empowerment in addition to promoting gender and caste sensitization. Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) is an NGO committed to grass roots and integrated community building with the villages surrounding Auroville. Through an expanding network of women and men Self Help Groups (SHG) and Federations of female and male leaders, AVAG offers a wide range of successful programs and initiatives to meet the complex needs of villagers. AVAG’s programs span the four critical areas of community development, economic development, capacity building, and psychosocial services. The component programs offered by AVAG include: micro financing and micro projects; capacity building trainings and seminars for villagers; psychological and physical health initiatives; global warming and environmental degradation awareness; livelihood trainings and social enterprise development; expansion of legal access for women and children confronted with human rights abuses; and caste integration exchange programs.

http://www.auroville.org/contents/805  or  http://villageaction.in/

Paalam

The objective of this project is to establish links with youth from villages in the immediate vicinity of Auroville. This is a Bioregion Action group written project, which is now being implemented with the help and input from YouthLink members as there is a common interest to encourage sustainable development, from the youth perspective, with the active participation of youth themselves. This project aims to provide training in sustainable village development through a program that would include exposure to Auroville and its ideals and to model village development throughout Tamil Nadu. The idea is that, by coming together, the youth themselves will be able to identify and mould their own ‘Paalam’ initiative(s) that could be implemented over the coming years and be part of a sub-regional development plan for Auroville and the bi-region. Currently the project has been funded by Stichting De Zaaier through Auroville’s Project Coordination Group and will cover about five sessions spread over about half a year. The program will include the option of also attending the Stewardship for New Emergence Leadership and Capacity Training also funded by Stichting De Zaaier. These sessions have been designed openly, as to provide the youth with space to team build, explore the current development landscape, share ideas and formulate their own dreams for
the future. The next sessions are being planned according to the interests expressed in the previous session, with the help of YouthLink’s core group. Youth from about 18 villages, who are already working actively in their villages, have been identified and invited to join with the help from Village Action Group as they have many years of experience working in the field. In total there were about 40 youth who attended the first session, with an additional 10 from YouthLink.

**YouthLink**

As a service, YouthLink is aimed to help voice youth concerns, help address youth needs and help younger generations in getting involved in the building of Auroville. YouthLink also aims to be a bridge between Auroville, its bio-region, India and the world. YouthLink supports young leaders, and youth related activities that aim at building a better world for all. Everyone is welcome. YouthLink has a Core Group of youth between the ages 18-35, but works with all age groups. Depending on the initiative, YouthLink engages younger youth, and calls on older mentors.

https://www.youthlink.org.in/about

**Ecofemme**

Eco Femme is a social enterprise that promotes healthy, dignified, affordable and eco-friendly menstrual practices. Eco femme designs and produces cloth washable menstrual pads that stitched by local women as part of a livelihood project. They have developed a “Pad for Pad” programme to provide menstrual hygiene education. They gift cloth-washable pads to girls from economically disadvantaged families as well as subsidize pads from international sales so that the products can be made affordable for women in India. Eco Femme conducts educational programmes on menstrual hygiene management and issues of sanitary waste. For which they have created a number of resources to take on advocacy work.

https://ecofemme.org/

**EcoPro**

EcoPro offers the following services: Training in EM technology, sometimes in the context of seminars and workshops in organic farming and urban gardening, sanitation and ecosan, wastewater treatment technologies, composting and municipal solid waste management, and sustainable management of water and natural resources, consultancy and technical guidance, in particular in EM technology for its whole application range. It gives lectures and presentations on sanitation and its ecological and historical context, on ecosan of human waste, and on solid waste management. They design and implement educational &
developmental programs in sanitation (in its wider sense) and in the repair and upgrading of sanitation facilities and services. They are engaged in fund-raising not only for programs under our own leadership, but, to a small extent, also for programs in close geographical proximity in Tamil Nadu where they are involved as implementation partners or as technical consultants, or where they are in a position to supervise and monitor and assess implementation. EcoPro’s outreach work is in the fields of public hygiene, solid waste management and water management.

http://www.ecopro.in/abtus-team.html

**Women's Empowerment through Local Livelihood (WELL paper)**

This started as a training and empowerment centre for women from the inland villages under Auroville’s Coastal Development Centre (ACDC), and the project soon spread. The goal of WELL is to empower women by providing an extended training program to aid them set up their own profit-sharing production units. For a period of six months, a group of eight to ten women learn to create products using recycled materials, mainly newspaper, as raw material. They are taught, amongst other things, to roll newspaper into reeds, which they then weave into baskets. From here on, there are no limits: they have created coasters, table-mats, accessories, bags, plates, and boxes, all of varying colours, shapes and sizes. Women laugh, sing, share and create not only new products but also a new life around them.

http://www.auroville.org/contents/3456

**Auroville Dental Centre for Education, Research, and Rural Action (ADCERRA)**

The Auroville Dental Centre for Education, Research and Rural Action is a unique program in India meeting the oral health needs of disadvantaged rural areas. It works with prevention and early intervention for long-term results. It offers check-ups, manual scaling, sealants, obturations and “a-traumatic restoration treatment” (ART). It also increases awareness about dental health via campaigns, targeting young generations. It is an active project in developing sustainable rural dental health care models for India.

http://ruraldentalcare.in/

**Auroville Bamboo Centre**

Bamboo Centre uses bamboo as a sustainable medium for developing a wide range of products; they manufacture toys, furniture, clothes, soaps and many other goods. Bamboo is
also used for construction and is quickly gaining a reputation of being something of a miracle grass. The centre offers educational workshops on the use of bamboo and welcomes a large numbers of visitors who come to learn about the products.

http://aurovillebamboocentre.org/

**WasteLess**

WasteLess is a non-profit social enterprise located in Auroville, dedicated to bringing about change to the way we make, dispose of, and think about waste. WasteLess believes that each one of us can make a positive and tangible difference for a better and cleaner future. A young dynamic team of professionals from diverse backgrounds commit to changing the world one piece of garbage at a time.

http://wastelessindia.org/

**Sustainable Livelihood Institute**

Sustainable Livelihood Institute (SLI) is a joint venture between the Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission and the Auroville Foundation. This cooperation, done on a large-scale, helps promote rural development based on the principles of sustainable development. This is a domain in which Auroville has a lot to contribute since many researches and experimentations are taking place here.

http://ibiindiaimagedatabase.com/SLI-Auroville/

**Deepam**

Deepam offers a daycare with educational activities for children and youth from the surrounding villages who have special needs. Outpatients from villages and from Auroville receive physiotherapy, speech therapy & occupational therapy. If required the children also receive health care, nutrition and appliances.

http://deepam-auroville.in/deepam/en/our-team/
**Mohanam**

Mohanam Cultural Centre began in 2001 under the Auroville Village Action Trust in a rural village, which is located in the Kaluveli/Auroville Bioregion in coastal Tamil Nadu, South India. The aim of Mohanam is to provide the young generation of the villages with an opportunity for extracurricular activities, which help them to find identity and connection to their own original culture, which faces tremendous change in the globalization process. It is an educational community centre for children that offers an after school activities program for kindergarten and older children. Although the primary focus is providing developmental childcare for pre-school children, the centre also conducts arts and crafts programs that are meant to revitalize the culture of the village: Bharatnatyam and classical Indian dance, Kolattam (stick dance), Kummi voice and dance, and Silambam (a martial art). The community centre, established in one of the last traditional houses of the village, is offering creative arts classes on the weekends for school going children. It also has a creche/kindergarten, evening tuition, and is actively uncovering remnants of original performing and craft skills in the local villages surrounding the International Community Project of Auroville. The purpose of these activities is to keep alive this intangible heritage through youthful interest, classes, studies and special programs.

http://mohanam.org/how-it-started/

**Auroville Earth Institute**

For 27 years, the Auroville Earth Institute has educated and empowered people to build their own dwellings using earthen techniques. This website provides information, images, and videos about the many earthen construction techniques, particularly Compressed Stabilized Earth Block (CSEB). You can also follow our activities and sign up for training courses.

http://www.earth-auroville.com/

**Centre for Scientific Research**

Auroville Centre for Scientific Research (CSR) is an international voluntary organization that works towards a sustainable future in the field of renewable energy systems (wind, solar, biomass), appropriate architecture & building technologies, wastewater recycling and
CSR has undertaken R&D projects in the fields of biogas plants, water pumping windmills and solar bowl concentrators for steam cooking, also doing demonstration projects of solar power plants for power generation, while AuroRE Projects & Services offers consultancy and implements projects on renewable energy.

http://www.auroville.org/contents/356

**Life Education Centre**

Life Education Centre (LEC) is an on-going programme to train young, underprivileged girls between the ages of 14-21, from villages in the region around Auroville. The Centre was created with a focus to help children ignored by conventional education systems and although, initially, the Centre allowed both girls and boys to attend, before long LEC changed to an all-female environment. The vocational training given to the girls helps them develop the skills necessary to be successful both in their future homes as well as in finding a suitable job. However, LEC is essentially a therapeutic learning community, where emphasis is placed on self-development tools. Education at LEC is individual-based, the needs of every student are evaluated and addressed; one of the most important interactions at the school is between the students and counsellor-coordinator, which naturally takes place on a one-to-one basis.

http://www.life-education-centre.org/about-lec/

**Pitchandikulam Forest**

With its library, database, artefacts and photo displays, provides a focus for the teaching of restoration ecology, environmental science, and the identification and use of indigenous medicinal plants. A major focus of Pitchandikulam is community outreach and is currently working in 25 villages throughout the Kaluveli bioregion. Its work involves working with communities to empower them towards self-sustainability and involve them in the process of eco-restoration. Currently they work in 25 villages throughout the Kaluveli bioregion in the following areas: Environmental education, establishing of women’s self-help groups (SHGs) and student eco-clubs, establishing rural enterprises promoting sustainable livelihoods, planting Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF), research-gathering: baseline, community and bio-resource surveys, Sustainable agriculture workshops, Health camps, Awareness programs (addressing topics such as health, hygiene, water, sanitation and HIV/AIDS) and income generation initiatives.
Swaddharma program

Swaddharma program is a response to the call for an education for our times. It offers young seekers – age 18 to 28 – the opportunity to embark on a transformative learning adventure with the goal of self-discovery. The program is based on the idea that helping young people discover who they are and what brings them alive is not only meaningful at an individual level, but also essential for building a socially just, environmentally sustainable and consciously awakened future. Swadharma semester has been designed as a multidisciplinary foundation programme. It provides the learner with knowledge and skills to develop themselves further in any field of work that one may get drawn into.

http://www.swadharma.auroville.org/

Thammarai learning centre

Thammarai started in 2006 with the aim to create a dynamic bridge to build inter cultural understanding and mutual respect between Auroville and the neighboring village of Edayanchavadi. Thammarai is a living experiment that fosters a harmonious relationship and healthy co-development between Auroville and neighboring Edayanchavady village. Thammarai projects are a bridge between Auroville and the neighboring villages. It supports the growth of the villagers’ potential through our informal education programs in areas of health, healing and environment.

http://www.auroville.org/contents/813

Auroville Institute of Applied technology

Offers training centre for Civil eng / draughtsman, ü Electronic & communication eng /mechanic, Data processing & computer applications, Computer software & hardware, maintenance, Office administration & accounting / secretary, Personality building and Life
Reach for the stars

Reach for the Stars is a project to finance the higher education of young people from the villages surrounding Auroville, Tamil Nadu, South India. The aims of Reach for Stars are to break the cycle of poverty and social deprivation and tap the tremendous promise and potential of young people, to increase their chances of growing up to be citizens with the motivation, self-confidence, and skills necessary to be strong, and to become positive contributors to the communities. The support and funding we receive enables motivated and able young men and women from poor and difficult backgrounds to achieve their educational potential through college/university education. Using the experience of NGOs we impose very clear and firm conditions on those we support. Students must cooperate fully with our team members who observe and monitor their academic and other progress and on that basis advise them.


Kolam Project

What originally began as a research project became an inspiration to empower the local village women by training them with tailoring and embroidery skills. The vision of keeping the tradition alive, empowering the local women so they can become financially independent therefore improving the quality of their life by providing them with skills and employment opportunities. Lively Boutique in cooperation with the Kolam Project promotes and sells the products that are designed and created by the women that take part in the project.

http://www.aurolively.org