

— *A sampling of Auroville's work with direct impact on the region*

There are 13 villages in the immediate area of Auroville, comprising about 40,000 people, and approximately 40 villages in the larger bioregional area.

Auroville Village Action Group

AVAG began over 40 years ago in response to a complex set of local and wider conditions that result in gender inequity, poverty and limited access to resources for development. Its reach now extends across 40 villages, directly impacting the lives of over 5,000 women, 1000 youth, and 3,000 children through participatory community development, economic development, capacity building, and psycho-social support. The component programmes offered by AVAG include: micro-finance, collective work initiatives, psycho-social and physical health initiatives, environmental awareness, livelihood and social enterprise development, expansion of legal access for women and children confronted with human rights abuses, caste integration, exchange programmes, and exposure trips.



Women working with AVAG



Eco Femme presentation on menstrual cycles

Eco Femme

Founded in 2010, this women-led social enterprise makes washable cloth pads and nappies and promotes menstrual practices that are healthy, dignified and eco-friendly. The organic-certified cloth products are stitched by a women's group in the bioregion. Their Pad for Pad programme offers girls in rural India cloth pads donated through international sales, while Pads for Sisters provides pads at cross-subsidised rates to Indian women. The enterprise also works with girls, women and NGOs to deliver menstrual education, exploring taboos and teaching responsible practices. To date, EcoFemme has sold and distributed more than 1.3 million pads, saving 103 million disposable pads from ending up in landfills, and it has reached over 90,000 girls and women through its educational programme.

WELL Paper

This Women Empowered through Local Livelihood (WELL) project started in 2005 as a local tsunami rehabilitation response. WELL Paper grew to become a working model for social enterprise development combining product design, production, sales and training programmes. Today, after years of experience, WELL women teach social enterprise development and eco-handicraft skills to other social organisations around India. The WELL women are organised as independent profit-sharing groups earning income according to quality of performance and group progress. The leading vision is empowerment and ecological awareness implemented through social values.



WasteLess

WasteLess is an organisation that develops innovative educational programmes about sustainable consumption and waste management. Elements from their curricula have been incorporated into Tamil Nadu's official syllabus and science textbooks. In 2022, the Sea Change programme on marine plastic pollution was launched in 200 Tamil Nadu government schools, and has now reached 13,500 students.



SVARAM

Initiated in 2003 as a local income generation project, SVARAM - Musical Instruments and Research has been recognised by the UN's Music as a Global Resource Initiative as one of its first 50 projects worldwide. It started with the two founders teaching a small group of unemployed local youth basic music tuning systems and carpentry skills and then exploring with these youth how to make and repair sound producing instruments of different kinds. Today Svaram is a co-managed association with 86 largely local employees. Its production unit manufactures sound instruments that are sold in over 30 countries. Many of the unique instruments are co-created in a shared process. SVARAM runs courses, training programmes, and visits to its Auroville workshop and Sound Garden; its sound gardens, pathways and other large sound installations can be found in public and private spaces around India.



Auroville Health Centre

The Auroville Health Centre is recognised as a Mini-Health Centre by the Tamil Nadu Government and provides medical care, laboratory facilities and a pharmacy for Auroville, the bioregion, and visiting guests alike. A mobile team of local women trained as health workers also visit six village sub-centers offering primary health care, traditional medicines and natural therapies.

Auroville Dental Centre

Auroville has had its own dental clinic for the last 40 years. Qualified dentists offer comprehensive treatment at the main clinic, while local women provide basic screening and education on oral hygiene and preventive care at 10 sub-centres in the area. Every year 1,400 school students from 17 schools around Auroville and 1,850 patients from the bioregion are treated. Tooth decay among the children has reduced from 90% to 50%.

Aurokiya Integral Eye Centre

Aurokiya offers a primary eye care centre, outreach camps in the bioregion, school and workplace screening programmes, awareness activities to promote eye wellness and classes in eye yoga. This is a fairly recent endeavour started by a third generation Tamil Aurovilian who headed the administration of Aravind Eye Hospital in Pondicherry for 12 years, receiving numerous awards and international recognition for his work. He founded Aurokiya in 2021 to focus on preventive eye care and prevention of blindness in Auroville and the bioregion.



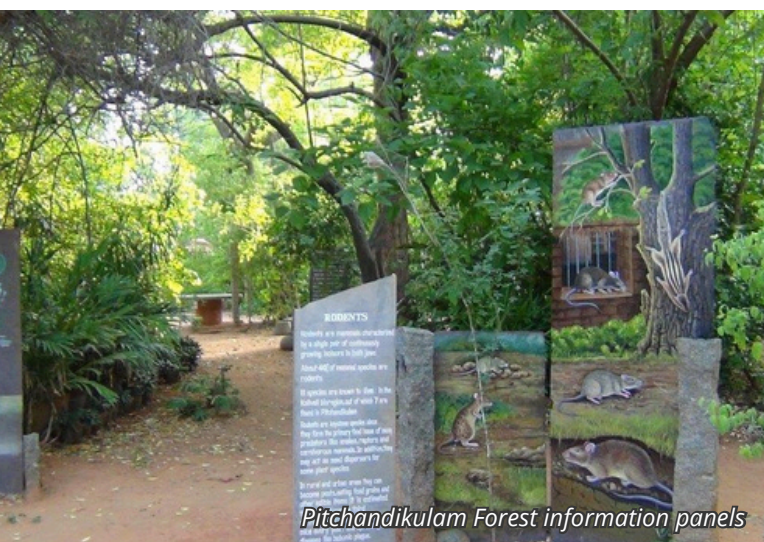
The Auroville Health Centre in Kulilapalayam



A consultation at the Auroville Dental Centre



Aurokiya eye health screening



Pitchandikulam Forest information panels



Pitchandikulam Forest team members and employees



School programme at the Auroville Botanical Garden

Pitchandikulam

Started over 50 years ago, this forest sanctuary is dedicated to community and environmental initiatives that restore the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest biosphere and the life supporting, enduring bond between Tamil people and their natural surroundings. Pitchandikulam supports: environmental education across 100 bioregion schools; an indigenous medicinal plant programme involving conservation, education, treatment, and social enterprise; and restoration ecology in the immediate bioregion and elsewhere in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Botanical Garden

The 50-acre Botanical Garden started in 2000 with a 10-acre Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest plantation for conserving native vegetation. Its Environmental Education Programmes began several years later. The Garden hosts school children, local women's groups, and teacher groups for educational visits and camps, reaching over 3500 individuals annually from the local region and across India. Additional programmes are open to Auroville residents and participants worldwide.

To celebrate Auroville's 50th anniversary, protected green spaces were created in 55 neighbouring schools, increasing greenery in the children's environment and fostering a bond with nature. The team also implements eco-landscaping, mine eco-restoration, and conservation and research projects. It has completed over 30 re-afforestation projects in India.



Kolam creation at the Mohanam Centre

Auroville Institute of Applied Technology

AIAT has provided certified vocational training to more than 2700 bioregion youth since 2004. It now offers a full-fledged Bachelor of Vocation degree programme in affiliation with Pondicherry University.

Life Education Centre

Founded in 1991, LEC focuses on education and empowerment of women in the Auroville bioregion through vocational, functional and social skills development grounded in local culture and traditions. It has provided a supportive learning space for over 500 local women seeking continued personal growth and peer connection. Their desire to financially support themselves and their families inspired the development of Sakhi, a social enterprise producing beautiful handmade items.

Mohanam Village Heritage Centre

A group of local youth created Mohanam 20 years ago. Mohanam organises varied educational, art, craft, and cultural programmes with children, youth, and women to keep local artistic traditions alive. These include dance, music, theatre arts, and martial arts. The Centre also operates a kindergarten, supports women's empowerment through training in leadership, self defence, and other skills, and brings local youth together to engage in varied community development activities.

Endangered Crafts Mela

For the past five years, this annual event has helped inspire and introduce school-age children from Auroville and the bio-region to many local, traditional and endangered crafts and performance arts. Over the course of an immersive, experiential week, artisans, craftspersons and performance artists from around Tamil Nadu share their skills, stories, heritage, and passion for continuing the crafts and arts that have shaped their lives.



Endangered Crafts Mela