

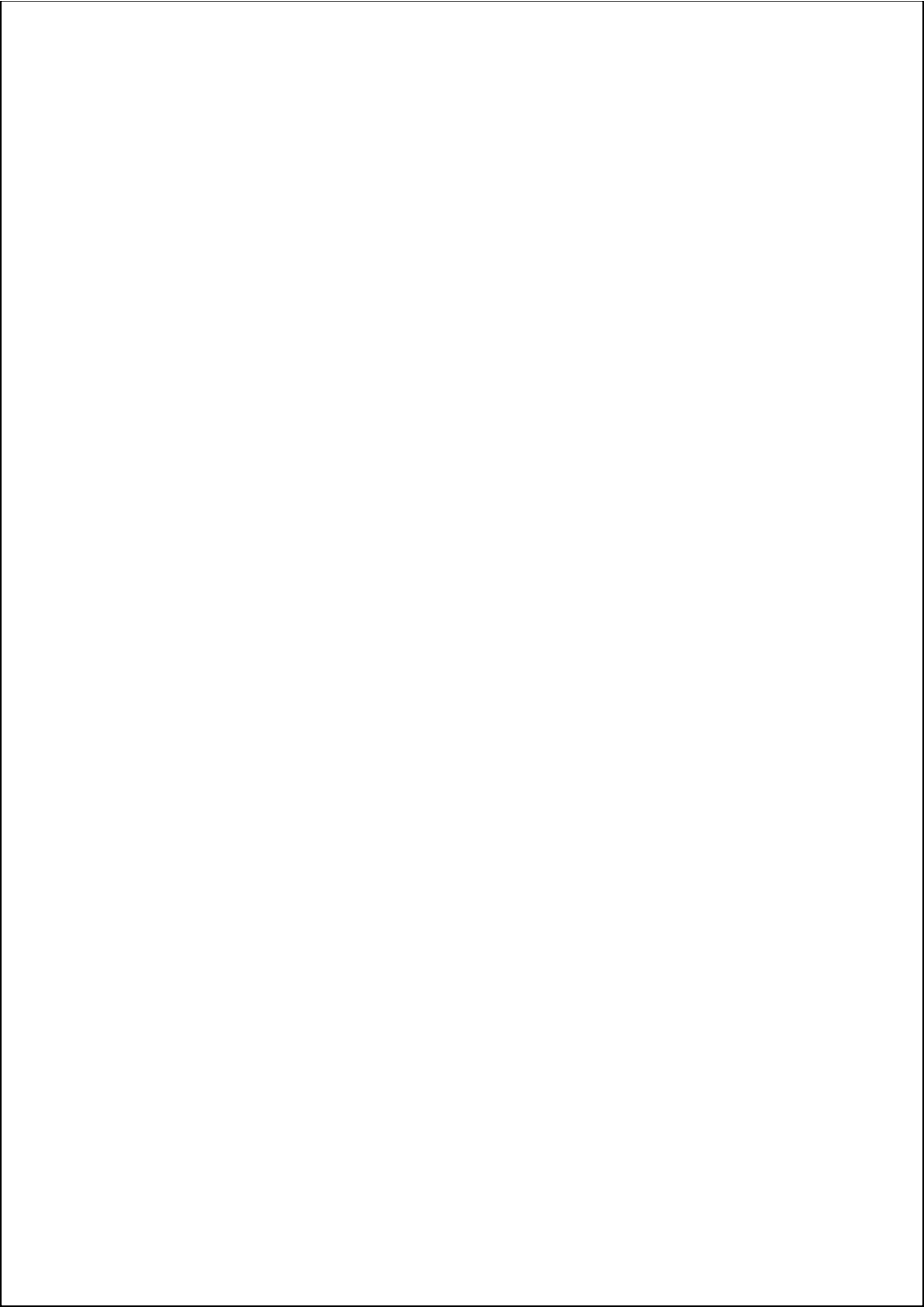


Annual Report

November 2007 - October 2008



Auroville Coastal-area Development Centre





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Preventive Health Education Programme

The Auroville Coastal-area Development Centre (ACDC)

is a non-governmental organisation based in Auroville, an international township in Tamil Nadu, South India. ACDC aims to empower people at the grass-roots level through social, economic, educational and environmental programmes.

Relief & Rehabilitation Phase



The Auroville Tsunami Relief & Rehabilitation Project (ATTRRP) was established in the aftermath of the December 2004 Asian tsunami, which affected millions of people in countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Immediately after the tsunami struck, emergency relief camps were set up in Auroville for thousands of people fleeing their coastal villages in search of a safe place. The relief camps provided shelter, food, blankets, clothes and medical care for around 2,500 people. During the relief phase, which lasted for three months, food, cooking utensils, clothes, buckets, trunks and sports & school materials were distributed to 25 affected coastal villages with a combined population of 35,000.

Physical health care was initially provided in the relief camps, with the assistance of Auroville Health Services. Later, health camps were organised in four villages with the help of Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, where affected people received free medical care. Emergency counselling was given to 255 individuals who suffered from post traumatic stress symptoms.

Five affected coastal villages were cleared of debris, with the collaboration of a large number of volunteers from Auroville. Temporary shelters were arranged for 101 families in the villages of Chinnamudaliyarchavady and Bommaiypalayam. The shelters were constructed with casuarina poles, granite pillars and coconut thatch. Electricity and water connections were supplied by the occupants themselves. At the end of the relief phase, ATRRP began to implement a wider rehabilitation programme.

These are some of the activities which were carried out during the rehabilitation phase:

Cash for Work

A 'cash for work programme' was initiated in 14 coastal villages for a period of two months. The affected populations cleared their villages of rubble and debris and were remunerated in cash for their work. This provided them with compensation for loss of livelihood. Each day that the 'cash for work programme' was in operation, about 50 people worked in each village. Temporary income was generated in this way for 3,505 families.

Vocational Training Programmes for Youth Computer Education

Computer education was offered to youth from the tsunami-affected villages at the Auroville Industrial School, which presented them with new opportunities for livelihood. Twenty-seven young people followed a Desk Top Publishing course for three months, and eleven attended a one year computer software and hardware course.

Engine Repair & Welding

Many fishing boats were damaged after the tsunami, preventing the fishermen from going out to sea and earning their livelihood. An engine repair workshop was set up in Chinnamudaliyarchavady.

Twenty-two youth from different coastal villages attended a six month training programme in engine repair and welding. During that time, 195 fishing boat engines were repaired in the workshop.

Tsunamika

The Tsunamika project was initiated by the Upasana Design Studio. The Tsunamika dolls are handmade by fisherwomen, whose livelihoods were directly affected by the tsunami. The aim of the project is to empower disadvantaged women, by giving them the confidence to create and market their own products and train others. The Tsunamika project is based on the gift economy concept. Tsunamika is given unconditionally to whoever wants her. Tsunamika has no price tag. She is travelling all over the world through a network of volunteers. The Tsunamika project has enabled the women to rebuild their lives and to become self sufficient. This project later became independent from ATRRP and it continues.

Fishing Tools

Two students from the National Institute for Design (NID) conducted a study to identify areas for product intervention in the traditional fisheries sector. Their objective was to improve the livelihood of marginalised producers, processors and traders, through the application of strategic and appropriate product design. Prototypes for tools that could be used by women fish vendors were developed. These included tools which could be used in the preservation, transportation, preparation and handling of fish.

Organisational Change

Almost two years after the tsunami hit, the programme broadened from tsunami relief and rehabilitation activities to overall development work. In October 2006 ATRRP officially concluded all relief and rehabilitation work, and changed its name to Auroville Coastal-area Development Centre (ACDC).

Since then, ACDC has concentrated on long term sustainable development projects for communities in the Auroville bio-region. Areas of focus included:

- Knowledge Building
- Community Institution Building and Micro Credit
- Livelihood
- Environment
- Shelter and Infrastructure
- Health, Hygiene & Sanitation

Knowledge Building

Auroville NGO
Coordination & Knowledge
Resource Centre

The concept of District Resource Centres (DRCs) was developed in early 2005, when the tsunami response was in its relief phase. At that time, the Villupuram district collector appointed AV NCKRC as the DRC for Villupuram. AV NCKRC became a coordination hub, and regular meetings were held with NGOs. It was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from

February 2006 to December 2007. AV NCKRC developed into a common platform for all NGOs in the Villupuram district to share information and knowledge. It also provided an opportunity for the NGOs to liaise with government officials.

The main purpose of the Knowledge Resource Centre was to share Auroville's knowledge with government officials and NGOs. The aim was to make sure that reconstruction and rehabilitation happened in an environmentally friendly manner, with good planning and with scientific and technical backing. The Knowledge Resource Centre worked with Centre for Scientific Research (CSR), Eco Pro, the Auroville Earth Institute, Shakti and Botanical Gardens. Workshops and trainings on hygiene & sanitation, eco restoration, the use of Effective Micro-organism, renewable energy and alternative building technologies were organised for NGOs and government officials.

An important activity of AV NCKRC was providing advocacy in the following fields: beach erosion; the protective role of bio-shields; awareness on sanitation in relation to ground water contamination; the concept of regional planning; flood mitigation; technical support & implementation of different technologies, including GIS mapping. AV NCKRC also brought out several publications on various topics. These included posters, brochures, booklets and audio visual CDs. The issues addressed were solid waste management, flood mitigation, sanitation & hygiene, Effective Micro-organism technology and livelihoods.



Workshop on Sustainable Habitats :
Biogas technology

Community Institution Building & Micro Credit

Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG)
Paalam



The Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG), which works with Women Self Help Groups and Paalam, which works with Men Self Help Groups have both been implementing programmes focusing on community institution building and micro credit.

Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG)

Introduction & History

Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) was formed in 1983, with the goal of building a bridge between Auroville and the surrounding villages. AVAG aims to create opportunities, and provide support to the local population in order to improve their social and economic situation. Initially, AVAG's programme focused on the formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and the setting up and running of night schools for children. Ten years later, AVAG shifted its focus to women's empowerment and began to carry out its programme exclusively through its Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs).

Today AVAG's activities are implemented through its network of 200 WSHGs, consisting of 3,500 members. Each group has between 12 and 20 members between the ages of 18 and 55 years. The Udhayam Women's Centre was formed as a representative body for all the AVAG WSHGs. A 'federation' of leaders was established to act as a core group, which is responsible for collective decision-making on behalf of all the WSHGs.

AVAG's primary goal is to empower women at the individual and group level by employing a policy of 'people's participation'. This is done by building and supporting community-based institutions for social and economic progress through its WSHGs.

The overall objectives are:

- To encourage women's solidarity and cooperation
- To create awareness about social issues, such as gender and caste discrimination and women's rights, as well as specific topics, including sanitation, health and education
- To disseminate information about credit opportunities through various government and bank schemes, and to assist the WSHGs in accessing them
- To actively encourage savings, and provide credit through a revolving fund
- To support income generating activities
- To encourage WSHG members to take up collective responsibility for improving and maintaining village infrastructure through work camps and micro projects

Achievements Women's Federation

At present there are 25 core group members. Each member is elected to represent six to seven WSHGs for a period of two years. Fortnightly federation meetings, facilitated by AVAG staff, provide an opportunity for these women to address relevant issues. The formation of the Udhayam Women's Centre marked a crucial step in handing over responsibility and decision-making to local women. Today, while the WSHGs are still guided, advised and overseen by AVAG staff, the women are now in control of most of the decision-making and loan process.

Women's Empowerment

AVAG's most important effort has been the setting up of Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs) to empower women at the individual and group level. Within their communities, these women often experience societal oppression. Being part of a WSHG gives women the confidence to make decisions at both the family and the community level.



Agriculture as an income generating activity

A Case Study

Women's Day Festival



Every year, thousands of women from AVAG Women Self Help Groups celebrate the Women's Day Festival. This year over 3,500 women and their families participated in the festival, which was held on three consecutive Sundays.

On the first Sunday, the celebration took place in the women's own communities. Sometimes festivities take place within a WSHG, and at other times WSHGs get together and celebrate at the community level. On this occasion, the women took part in different games and sports competitions. In their communities, they distributed books, pens and sweets to school children, while spreading awareness on women's issues.

On the second Sunday, thousands of women came to the Auroville Village Action Group Centre. This event focused on competitions of various kinds including: Kolam drawing, clay work, games such as musical chairs and a race in which women had to balance an earthen pot on their heads. A debate was organised and individuals volunteered

to participate. "I participated in the debate," says Vaigalakshmi, from the Umadan WSHG. "It gave me an opportunity to express myself more freely than I normally can. I felt supported by the women and this gave me confidence."

On the third Sunday, the celebrations were held at the Auroville Village Action Group Centre again. Cultural performances took place, including both traditional and modern dances and songs. There were also theatre performances focusing on women's issues such as dowry killings, rape, caste discrimination, and alcoholism. This was followed by the distribution of prizes.

The Women's Day Festival is an important event in the women's lives. "In our society, men are high and women are low. We are not seen as equals, but I feel that men and women should be equal. Women's Day is the best thing in the world," says Danuja, from the Natchathiram WSHG.

WSHGs

In each WSHG, the members select two to four leaders to represent their group, either as 'animators' or 'representatives'. Animators are responsible for organising their WSHG, conducting group meetings and facilitating group discussions. Representatives are responsible for collecting repayments from SHG members, cash transactions and deposits at the bank. These positions change annually, in order to develop leadership skills in all of the women in each WSHG.

AVAG requires that each WSHG holds two internal meetings a month. The first is to bring financial accounting up to date and ensure savings are deposited and loan payments are collected, while the second is designed to bring the women together to discuss topics that affect their lives, such as gender discrimination, family problems or community needs.

WSHGs are required to collect savings as a group for the first three months, so that the women can use that amount for internal lending. Once AVAG sees that the WSHGs are successful in saving and repaying internal loans, they become eligible to receive a loan from AVAG. Animators and representatives are responsible for collecting the instalments from their WSHG members for the

repayment of loans. AVAG offers training for animators and representatives, and calls meetings for new or poorly performing groups in order to give them orientation and to help them organise themselves better.

Seminars

In order to increase awareness on micro credit related topics (loan repayment, government schemes etc), AVAG organises day-long seminars for WSHG members. Each WSHG sends their animators or representatives to attend the seminar. Depending on the topic being discussed, AVAG invites resource persons with expertise in the field.

Loans

AVAG prides itself on a 100% recovery rate on all internal and external loans taken by its WSHGs.

Over the years, a shift has occurred in how WSHG members use their loans. An increasing number of women now seek funds to further their children's education, as well as to build or improve existing income generating enterprises.

Exchange Visits

One of AVAG's activities has been organising exchange visits for WSHGs from different castes and villages. Women from both groups spend a day in each other's villages; talking, playing games and eating together. Through these exchange visits, the women share experiences, learn from each other and become friends. These visits are also helpful in tackling discrimination between Dalits and Non-Dalits.

Future Plans

In November 2008, the AVAG women's centre and the Paalam men SHGs will merge. Many of the activities will then be organised for both men and women SHGs, including capacity building workshops, training and exposure visits. AVAG will continue to provide gender sensitisation programmes to bring awareness on gender issues.

Since women feel more confident when carrying out activities in large groups, AVAG aims to form new SHGs in the same villages. Having multiple SHGs in existing villages helps the women to form a stronger sense of community and allows them to do projects collectively.

Paalam

Introduction & History

The Paalam project began in January 2005. Initially, the project was implemented because there was a need for dialogue between ATRRP and the target populations. Paalam means "bridge" in Tamil. This refers to the representatives from each tsunami-affected village, who link the community and ATRRP. Paalam members attended monthly meetings convened by ATRRP, where they discussed issues of concern in their respective villages. The meetings were also a forum for NGOs, government officials and the private sector (banks, insurance companies, etc.) to share information. The main goal of the project was to create local partnerships in the affected villages for the implementation of rehabilitation and long term development projects.

Later, as a result of imbalances created between the coastal and inland populations of the bioregion, ACDC's target population was enlarged to include inland villages. At first, the Paalam project coordinators organised monthly meetings outside the MSHG structure. This proved difficult, because some of the attendees were from non-target villages. Certain programmes were accessible only to ACDC target members, and this meant that not all attendees had access to them. Due to this, the Paalam project changed, and all activities and programmes started being held within the MSHG structure.

Currently, the Paalam project operates 58 Men Self Help Groups (MSHGs), with a total of 1,000 members from 22 Panchayats. 7% of these are from fishing villages, 38% are from coastal villages (fishermen and non-fishermen) and 55% are from Dalit communities.

The primary goal of the project is to enhance and strengthen capacities, both at the individual and group level. This is done by building and supporting community-based institutions for social and economic progress, through the formation of MSHGs.

The overall objectives are:

- To build and strengthen MSHGs by improving their members' skills and knowledge
- To apply micro credit methods by encouraging savings and providing credit
- To encourage MSHGs to take up collective

responsibility for the improvement and maintenance of their community infrastructure, through work camps and micro projects

- To provide educational support to children and youth by setting up night schools and physical education classes

Achievements

Awareness & Community Building

To build and strengthen MSHGs, and improve the members' skills and knowledge, internal meetings, monthly seminars, federation meetings, exposure visits and trainings & workshops have been carried out. Over the last few years, MSHGs have gained the necessary tools to make better decisions at both the individual and community level. They have a stronger sense of responsibility for the development of their communities.

Career Guidance Workshop

This year a career guidance workshop was organised for high school students from ACDC target villages. The workshop aimed to provide information about the different courses offered at higher institutions, scholarships and various career prospects, and to encourage students to take advantage of these opportunities. Representatives from different institutions gave presentations on various departments such as medical science, hotel management and engineering. Sixty-five students and twenty-two parents participated in this workshop. Students and parents found this workshop very informative and useful. They felt that it was a great way to explore various fields of higher education.

Entrepreneur Orientation Training

A three day entrepreneur orientation training session was organised, and 25 MSHGs attended. The goal was to provide necessary tools for the selection, setting up and managing of a business. Training focused on the characteristics that make a successful entrepreneur, the importance of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, how to write a viable project proposal, and marketing strategies for a business. At the end of the training, a model project proposal was prepared by the trainer with the active involvement of all the participants.

A Case Study

Cycle Rally to Create Awareness on Global Warming

Saral is a MSHG from Edyanchavady which has been actively involved in the development of their village. Recently, they organised a two day cycle rally to create awareness on global warming. They stopped in 30 villages along the way.



The members had collected information on global warming, and they printed pamphlets about simple day to day measures that individuals can adopt to reduce global warming. The pamphlets were distributed to more than 2,000 people during the rally. They described the advantages of: using CFL bulbs instead of ordinary bulbs to save electricity, minimising the use of motorised two wheelers, using cloth or paper bags for shopping rather than plastic, and planting trees.

The rally was inaugurated by the village leaders and many people came to cheer them on. The rally started in the early morning, and along the way they distributed pamphlets and gave talks in schools and village squares. The group was warmly received in the villages they passed through, and people pledged to make an effort to reduce their impact on the environment.

The success of this rally has encouraged the members of Saral, and inspired them to take up other projects encouraging environmental awareness.

Cell Phone Repair Training

A cell phone repair training workshop was organised in collaboration with the Anbalayam Training Centre, Pondicherry. The workshop, which lasted two weeks, was attended by 22 participants from different MSHGs. They learned about the fundamental principle of cell phone mechanism and the function of SIM cards in the morning theory sessions, and received practical training in the afternoons. Once the training was completed, every participant was given a cell phone repair tool kit. The participants all attended regularly, and their serious involvement was appreciated by the trainers. This training has helped those who attended to acquire the skills they need to find employment in the cell phone repair sector. Having completed the workshop, the participants have the possibility of setting up their own service unit.

MSHG Leaders Exposure Trip

A two day exposure trip was organised for 35 MSHG leaders. They visited a NGO called People's Action for Development (PAD), which works in a politically and caste sensitive area in Tamil Nadu. PAD's programme covers more than 100 villages, and consists of over 170 SHGs, out of which 122 are MSHGs. The MSHG leaders benefitted from this trip in many ways. They were exposed to various issues, encompassing caste and gender equality, the importance of collaboration between NGOs and including all families in village development programmes.

Micro Credit

Over the years MSHGs have improved their repayment of external loans, and this year the recovery rate has reached 100%. The internal repayment of loans has also increased from 80% to 96% this year. This is mainly because the criteria for receiving loans changed, and a checklist was developed to monitor and evaluate the performance of each group. This list keeps track of loan repayment rates, and eligibility for government or ACDC loans and schemes, as well as participation in community institution building activities. The list evaluates members' performance, and groups which perform better have access to more schemes. The grading of each MSHG is discussed openly at the monthly seminars, and this has been found to give an incentive to other MSHGs to improve their overall performance. Another reason for regular repayment

of loans was due to a policy change which requires that members take turns in making the deposits.

Since the checklist has been put into practice, more MSHGs are recommended to the banks based on their performances. Last year, all 14 recommended MSHGs have accessed a government revolving fund of Rs.45,000 each. This year, 35 more MSHGs fulfilled the necessary requirements and were recommended for this revolving fund.

There has been a change in what MSHG members take loans for. An increasing number now take loans to start or build up income generating enterprises. 18% of loans taken by MSHG members are used for agriculture and 11% go towards their children's education.



Grading of MSHGs

Work Camps & Micro Projects

MSHG members carry out work camps in order to strengthen their group, and at the same time they gain recognition from their communities. A minimum of two work camps need to be successfully completed before a MSHG is eligible to implement a micro project. More than 200 work

A Case Study

Sports Day

This year, sports day was celebrated at the AVAG centre in Irumbai. Six hundred and fifty Paalam MSHG members participated in the competitions and games. These included: a volley ball tournament in which 19 MSHGs took part, athletic competitions such as long jump and relay races, a seven kilometre marathon and various games including tug-of-war and a slow bicycle race. The event was organised by the Paalam coordinators, in collaboration with the SSF staff and Pondicherry University students. Two hundred women from AVAG SHGs helped with the preparations. The event was attended by Panchayat leaders and bank managers.

Murugapathy and Suresh, members of the Saral MSHG, thoroughly enjoyed the sports day festivities. "It was a great opportunity for us to make friends with members of other MSHGs," they said. "We enjoyed the games, competitions and great spirit of sportsmanship."

A debate was held, and famous speakers argued for or against television. A cultural programme was organised, giving MSHG members the opportunity to perform dances and dramas on stage. The celebrations ended with the distribution of prizes and closing speeches, which were applauded by all present.



camps have been carried out by MSHGs so far. The work camps included: street clean-ups, planting trees and the cleaning of community water tanks.

Micro projects are implemented when on-the-ground community needs are identified by MSHG members and a proposal is written up wherein 30% of project costs are met by the community (whether in cash or in kind). If the micro project is approved by ACDC, the work is carried out by the MSHG members. A total of 60% of MSHGs involve themselves regularly in micro projects. Over 40 micro projects have been executed in the last years. Micro projects included setting up a library in an old traditional building, repairing community toilets, improving an existing water distribution system, and a cycle rally to create awareness on global warming.

Future Plans

From November 2008 onwards, the Paalam men SHGs and AVAG women's centre will merge. Many activities, for example capacity building workshops, trainings and exposure visits, will be organised jointly for both men and women SHGs. This positive step will encourage shared planning whenever community-based activities are undertaken. It will also make it easier for the combined men and women SHGs to take advantage of various government schemes such as the building of community toilets, housing etc.

Education

Night Schools

The night school programme began in March 2005. The primary goal is to support students from low socio-economic backgrounds, where illiteracy among parents is high, and living conditions make it difficult for students to study. The objectives of the programme are to provide students with a quiet space to study and to teach lessons that complement their regular education. Teachers use innovative teaching methods and provide special assistance to those who need it.

Night schools operate six days a week at 10 centres in inland and coastal villages. They provide tuition for a total of 335 students from the age of 5 to 14, who study in 1st to 10th standard. The night school teachers undergo initial training with a qualified teacher, and are then required to attend monthly training sessions.

Achievements

Innovative Teaching Methods

An innovative method has been adopted for teaching, and this has changed the nature of classes, so that they are more fun. This method uses educational activities and interactive games to create a more stimulating learning experience, while also encouraging students to work together and assist each other. According to both students and teachers, lessons have improved since this new method has been implemented. Parents are very satisfied with the teaching methods, as they have seen a marked improvement in their children's performance and their examination grades have improved. Parents appreciate that, in addition to core subjects, there is a strong focus on topics like the environment and sanitation.

Newsletter & Weather chart

Recently, teachers started a newsletter to publish articles written by the students. The students share their concerns on issues within their communities, e.g. the cleanliness of the streets, health & hygiene etc. The newsletter encourages students to improve their writing skills. The children have also learnt to use a weather chart. Students are responsible for keeping track of the weather on a daily basis. Through this activity, they have become aware of the importance of weather and its impact on communities, the environment and agriculture.

Parent & Teacher Meetings

Paalam field staff have also been conducting meetings with the parents of night school students. Information is shared with parents regarding their children's attendance, performance, cleanliness & hygiene, as well as the innovative teaching methods which are used. The meetings are held in groups or on an individual basis every two months. These meetings have been found to positively impact parental involvement in the children's performance, and attendance has improved.

Exposure Trip

A total of 177 students, 20 teachers and ACDC field staff went on an exposure visit to Anna Zoological Park, Birla Planetarium in Chennai and the historical shore-temple city of Mahabalipuram. The visit to the Zoological Park gave the students an opportunity to learn more about animals and their behaviour, as well as their eating habits. In the planetarium they visited

the science exhibitions, and through an audio visual show, they learnt about the planets and the galaxy. This exposure visit gave the students an opportunity to experience something new and different.

Environmental Education

A total of 335 students from 10 night schools have taken part in a one day awareness programme on global warming at the Auroville Botanical Gardens, which is part of the Eco Education Programme (page 21). The programme consisted of a slide show on global warming, observing a pond as an example of an aquatic ecosystem and looking at solar panels and learning how they function. Students were asked what they could do as individuals at school and in their communities to curtail global warming. They also tried to find their way out of a maze which was created through planting TDEF. Students were given the opportunity to express what they had learnt through drawing. At the end of the workshop, many students said that they would make an effort to share the information they had acquired, and to reduce their impact on global warming through planting trees and reducing their use of plastic bags.

Sports Training

Since September 2006, Sports Sans Frontieres (SSF), an organisation based in France, has collaborated with ACDC in the implementation of a sports training programme for young children from 8 to 14 years of age. The primary goal of the programme is to promote citizenship through sports, and to create awareness about the importance of physical activities for the overall well being & development of children and youth.

The objectives of the programme are:

- To develop and improve sports locations and make them secure
- To bring teaching methods to the local universities, to encourage the teaching of sports for psycho-social ends (rather than competition) for future sports teachers
- To develop different and unique tools for sports education
- To train volunteers to organise sports activities, and teach them about the value of sports as an educational tool for children

The programme is currently being implemented in six coastal villages, four of which are in fishing

communities. A total of 300 children participate in the programme. The SSF team collaborates with physical education students from Pondicherry University to train young volunteers from the communities where the programme is being implemented. Once trained, these volunteers will assume responsibility for the programme.



Having fun with ball games

Achievements

Female Participation

Previously, the Panchayat had reservations about female volunteers teaching sports, and having both girls and boys participating in the programme. However, now the Panchayat sees the importance of the programme being available for both girls and boys, and encourages female participation for both volunteers and students. Gradually, the male-female ratio has changed; more women volunteers now take part in the programme (7 out of 18 volunteers are women) and more girls participate (115 of the 300 children are girls).

Volunteer Selection

The volunteer selection process has improved since it started to operate through the MSHGs and WSHGs. Previously it was overseen by the local panchayat. SHG members better understand the

importance of sports, and this makes them better candidates for selecting volunteers. It was found that working through the SHGs ensured better performance and more committed volunteers. SHG involvement in this process has also meant that its members are realising the importance of sports, and are enthusiastically assisting with sports training. For example, they provide drinking water for children participating in the sports training.

Improved Attendance

Parents support the sports programme, and are therefore more inclined to send their children punctually. Children are also more enthusiastic and overall attendance has improved. The volunteers' attendance has improved at both the training sessions and meetings. Volunteers start the programme on time, and they often stay to interact with the children outside of the sports training timings. SSF regularly calls meetings with all the volunteers, who always make an effort to attend, even if the meetings are called at short notice.

Value Education

Value education is an essential component of the sports training programme. Children are encouraged to share with each other, not to fight, and to assist each other. Parents have noticed that value education helps their children to respect their fellow students, remain active and stay focused. This leads to better performance in school, and the children are more helpful at home.

Future Plans

A trust made up of SSF local staff has recently been established. SSF will hand over the responsibility of the sports training to this trust. SSF will continue to fund this programme until the trust finds other sources of funding. The trust members plan to write a project to secure funds to continue the programme. After three years, the trust can apply for government schemes and funding.

Livelihood

WELL
(Women's Empowerment
through Local Livelihood)



The WELL project's main goals are to create alternative livelihood for women and to promote products made of recycled materials. The WELL Centre offers technical training, combined with a social empowerment programme. During the training, the women are taught to create products using recycled materials. Once the training is completed, the women are assisted by WELL in setting up their own independent profit sharing production workshops and in the marketing of their products.

The WELL project began in November 2005, and so far four groups of women (all of which are members of AVAG WSHGs) have undergone training and have been assisted by WELL in opening and running their own profit sharing production workshops in their villages.

Achievements

Social Enterprise Model

The inspiration behind this project is the 'social enterprise model' and as much emphasis is given to the social welfare of the women as to the technical training. WELL's social programme includes lessons in enterprise development and empowerment sessions, such as personal development coaching and group strengthening. As part of this programme, the women regularly take part in yoga sessions, receive lessons in health awareness and are encouraged to take part in health insurance schemes.

Training

At WELL, a lot of importance is given to technical training, which lasts for a period of approximately six months. The women learn to create products using recycled materials, mainly newspaper. They are taught to roll newspaper into reeds, which they weave into baskets. Along with baskets of different shapes, sizes and colours, the present range of WELL products includes coasters, paper beads, jewellery and hair clips. 'Creative Days' are organised at the Centre, where the women who have already set up their own production units continue to come and experiment with different techniques and product designs, while having fun.



Finishing touches on a coaster



Weaving a basket with newspaper reeds



Preparing the base for a woven basket

Profit Sharing Production Workshops

Since the project began, four groups, consisting of around ten women each, underwent training at the WELL Centre. All four groups were later assisted by WELL in setting up their own profit sharing production workshops. Three of the groups: Sri Mother, Mirra and Jeyam, set up their workshops in the village of Alankuppam, while the other group, Sri Aurobindo, opened their workshop in the village of Kootroad.

Although the four units are independent, they collaborate at different levels, and the women meet regularly to share their experiences in running their workshops. They also exchange tips on production and book keeping.

Initially, each group took a loan from AVAG to set up their production workshops. The first three groups have now successfully paid back the amounts they borrowed from the profit they have made. This demonstrates that they are all, as independent groups, able to meet their commitments.

A Case Study

WELL Family Day

On Sunday the 27th of April 2008, the WELL team organised the WELL Family Day. "It was an occasion for all the women, with their husbands and children to get together and celebrate," says Jannike, a volunteer at WELL, who organised the event with the women.

The event took place on the AVAG grounds in Irumbai, where a big colourful tent had been pitched. A welcome address was given, and a group of children, choreographed by Raji, of the WELL centre, performed on stage. This was followed by a magic show, and a kabbadi tournament. Later, there was a music performance featuring a group of talented young drummers. Finally, everybody sat down to a delicious home cooked lunch of biryani, vegetables and raitha prepared by the WELL ladies. It was a day of fun and celebration for the ladies and their families, which everyone will remember.

Social Integration

One of the significant achievements of the project has been the integration of women from different socio-economic backgrounds. All four groups are made up of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and castes. The women come from different villages, and some are educated and others illiterate. In spite of their differences, the women have managed to form strong groups and work together, to set up and run their production units.

WELL Centre and the Production Workshops

The WELL Centre continues to support the four production units with quality control and takes care of the marketing of their products. The women continue to benefit from WELL's social empowerment programme. With this support, the women run their workshops independently and they

are capable of taking on responsibility, at both the individual and group levels. Their performance is good and they are able to take initiative, manage production and complete their orders on time.

Future Plans

The WELL project will keep running as an independent unit with the aim of becoming sustainable. The four independent profit sharing production workshops will go on. The women will also continue to benefit from WELL's social empowerment programme.

Two new units are currently being established. One will be responsible for the production and marketing of WELL products, and the other will be responsible for the empowerment programme, as well as new product development and follow-up training for the women.

The Bicycle Project

As part of WELL's empowerment programme, bicycles were provided for the women who lived furthest away from their production workshops. The funds were received from private donors. Twenty women benefitted from this scheme. Before that, some women had to walk at least 45 minutes to and from work every day. Now, they have more time for house work and taking care of their children.

Environment

Eco Restoration
Eco Education



One of ACDC's objectives is the preservation and restoration of healthy and resilient eco-systems in this region. The approach is two-fold: initiating a mixed planting of TDEF (Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest) and Non-TDEF species along the coast, as well as environmental education and awareness creation.

Eco Restoration

The Eco Restoration project, which is being implemented by Shakti, began in March 2005. The primary goal of this project is to initiate the process of re-establishing TDEF (Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest) along the Coromandel Coast. Since this type of project had never been attempted along this coast before, the experimental nature of this particular project was emphasised from the start.

Initiating a mixed planting of TDEF, non-TDEF indigenous vegetation and appropriate exotic species is the first step towards this goal. Restoring the traditional relationship that local people had with the flora and fauna is essential for the re-establishment and preservation of TDEF, and is therefore a necessary component of the project as well.

Shakti, Implementing Partner

Shakti has been involved in the preservation, conservation and active restoration of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest since 1991. Thousands of seedlings have been raised in Shakti's nursery, including over 190 TDEF species. Shakti also set up a herbarium in 1994, which now houses 15,000 accessions representing nearly 4,500 species. As well as being involved in active restoration projects (such as ACDC's Eco Restoration project), Shakti also provides consultancy, technical expertise, advisory support and saplings to other organisations involved in projects of this nature.

The overall objectives are:

(1) To plant TDEF, non-TDEF indigenous and exotic species along the coast in order to initiate a tree line, where the exotic species can be gradually phased out.

(2) To experiment, using different techniques to provide physical protection to the planted saplings along the coast, and to compare their performances, so that the most effective techniques can be adopted.

(3) To involve the local population in the eco restoration process by (A) addressing some of their needs (fruit trees, bio-fencing for schools, incorporating tree species that are sources for food and/or fodder) through planting on the coast and in the surrounding village areas, and (B) initiating ecological awareness programmes for various stakeholders such as: school children, women and decision makers.

Achievements Plant Survival Rate

Since the project began, a total of approximately nine acres of coastal land, in the villages of Anumanthai (North and South), Chettinagar and Notchikuppam, were planted with a combination of TDEF, non-TDEF indigenous and exotic species. Initially, the survival rate of the saplings was very low. Over the last two years, however, it has greatly improved. Today the overall survival rate is 92%.



Putting up protection for a young seedling

The high survival rate is largely due to the three pronged approach which was adopted prior to planting. This included:

(1) Carefully selecting a variety of species that were likely to survive, and choosing saplings that had been nurtured in the nursery for a year or more.

(2) Planting the saplings with a nourishing mix of silt, clay and manure, as well as regular watering.

(3) Protecting the saplings through: (a) zoning the plants so that species that are more resistant to salt-spray and high winds are closer to the high

tide line; (b) providing cost effective tree guards made from woven coconut leaves to protect some of the saplings from strong wind, sun, and foraging animals; (c) planting a line of casuarinas between the planted area and the ocean; (d) having a security guard oversee the planted area.

Successful Bio-fencing

To encourage the culture of planting and caring for trees, a small bio-fencing activity was undertaken in the primary school of Chettinagar. A total of 500 saplings from seven different species were planted along a 250 metre stretch. The school staff and children were involved throughout the process and are now responsible for the care of the saplings. The bio-fence continues to thrive.

Awareness Programme

At Shakti, a Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest has been re-created through eco restoration work over the last 25 years. This forest now includes a diverse array of trees and shrubs, which provide food and shelter to wildlife including: hares, Indian fox, porcupines, monitor lizards, and different birds and butterflies. As part of its awareness programme, Shakti organises guided walks through this forest for stakeholders, including school children, women and decision makers.

Visits to Shakti's herbarium are organised for school children from target villages. These visits help to generate interest in ecology, tree identification and herbarium techniques.

To complement these educational activities, as part of ACDC's Eco Restoration project, Shakti has written and published two informative booklets: 'A Walk in a Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest, a living gene bank' and 'Para Taxonomy', a booklet which identifies plants in both Tamil and English.

Eco Restoration Documentary

A film was produced by a team of young film makers from Chennai to document the entire Eco Restoration project. This documentary: 'A Thin Green Line' highlights the challenges faced, lessons learnt and achievements of the project. The film is intended for other organisations and government departments working in the environmental field.

Future Plans

The Eco Restoration project will be handed over to the local community. Students from the target village schools will be selected to form Eco Clubs. The Eco Clubs will each have 10 to 15 members, including students from 9 to 15 years of age and panchayat members. The Eco Clubs will be taken on exposure trips to Shakti and other relevant organisations. The two publications mentioned previously will be used in their training, which will focus on the economic, social and medicinal value of plants and trees. Every week the Eco Restoration team will make follow-up visits to the Eco Clubs to assist them and answer any questions they may have.

Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF)

The Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) is the indigenous forest of the coastal seaboard of South East India. Historically, the forest extended from Vishakhapatnam in the North to Ramanathapuram in the South, as a belt of vegetation between 30 and 60 km wide, bordered on one side by the sea, and on the other side by a forest that became increasingly deciduous as one moved inland (Champion 1936; Gamble 1967). Today, the relevance of the forest lies within its vast botanical wealth, natural resources, and its ability to improve and enhance environmental conditions. The majority of TDEF species are known for their medicinal value and have been utilised by the local population in their traditional medical practices. Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest increases the water retention capacity of the soil, thereby replenishing the aquifers. Additionally, it can provide habitat for pollinators and predators of pests, both of which support sustainable agricultural practices.



Eco Education Programme

The Eco Education programme began in December 2007. The main objectives of the programme are to educate children about their immediate environment and impart knowledge about the interdependence and importance of ecosystems through visits and demonstrations. The programme also aims to motivate these children by encouraging a spirit of scientific inquiry, leading to an understanding of environmental problems and involving them in efforts for environmental preservation. The Eco Education programme is being implemented in 25 schools in coastal tsunami affected villages in the Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu, with a target group of 3,050 students, 450 teachers, 25 headmasters and 250 women from Self Help Groups. The programme is mainly being carried out through the Eco Clubs. These have been formed in some of the target schools, and each club consists of 25 to 30 children supervised by a teacher.

Achievements

Exposure Visits to the Botanical Gardens

So far, 600 students from 25 schools took part in exposure visits to the Botanical Gardens, focusing on global warming. The Eco Education team later visited the schools, to monitor any change in the students' behaviour and attitude regarding environmental issues. In many cases, it was noticed that the exposure visits had a positive impact and students had taken initiative by reducing their use of plastic and changing from regular bulbs to CFL bulbs.

Women's Self Help Groups

More than 250 women from 13 WSHGs, the majority of which were AVAG WSHGs, went for exposure visits to the Botanical Gardens. As most of these women are from agrarian communities, the focus was on agriculture related activities. During the one day exposure trip, the women learnt about soil preparation, vermi-composting, planting and the setting up and maintenance of nurseries and vegetable gardens. The women participated in an interactive session, where they were asked to remember what their communities were like 25 years ago and compare it with today's reality. Through this exercise, the women understood both the positive and negative impacts of development

on the environment. At the end of the programme, participants held a brainstorming session to find ways to become more environmentally conscious, both individually and at the community level.

Following this programme, some AVAG WSHGs members participated in a women's seminar at AVAG, where they shared the knowledge they had gained. As a result of the seminar, 1,000 women pledged their own funds to change their regular bulbs to CFL bulbs.

Teacher Training

Approximately 180 government and private school teachers, 40 AV Outreach school teachers and 10 ACDC night school teachers took part in the Green Teacher Training Programme. Through this programme the teachers learnt: how to form Eco Clubs and organise activities for them; what a teacher can do at the individual and community level to reduce global warming; how to include what they have learnt in their teaching and the school curriculum. The programme received a positive response from all the teachers who participated. Several of them, on their own initiative, started herbal gardens and tree planting in their schools.



Exposure visit to the Botanical Gardens

A Case Study

Art Festival on Global Warming

An Art festival on Global Warming was held in the village of Kulilapalayam. A hundred students, 35 teachers and 20 women from Self Help Groups participated. A huge strip of canvas was put up along the main road, and the children were encouraged to use their creative skills to represent environmental issues with brushes and paints. Through their painting, the children wanted to raise public awareness about global warming and its various causes. The children also drew attention to life style changes, which individuals can make in order to lessen their negative impact on the environment. These included: planting trees, changing regular light bulbs to CFL bulbs and using cloth bags as an alternative to plastic shopping bags.



This festival also gave children from different schools an opportunity to interact with and learn from each other. The festival lasted the whole morning and around 300 visitors, including children from other schools, youth, women and shop keepers from surrounding villages came to watch the children painting. The people of Kulilapalayam enjoyed the festival and requested that the painted canvas remain in the village for the next few days so that more people could become aware of global warming and other environmental issues.

Green School Programme

The Green School Programme has been successfully implemented in the following three schools: Kolpin Higher Secondary School, Kalapet Government Higher Secondary School and Chinnata Girls Secondary School. As part of this programme, the Eco Clubs went for an exposure visit to a TDEF forest, as well as to the Botanical Gardens, where they learnt about soil preparation, planting and the setting up and maintenance of nurseries. In the school yards, medicinal herbal gardens were planted by the Eco Club students. The Eco Clubs maintain these gardens. The implementation of the Green School Programme has been most successful in the Chinnata Girls Secondary School. This example can now serve as a model which can be replicated by other schools.

Eco Clubs

Fourteen Eco Clubs, consisting of 25 to 30 students each, have been formed so far. Eco Clubs organise various activities, such as cleaning up trash at the school and organising writing competitions related to global warming. They also assist the Eco Education team in planning for various events and festivals. The Eco Club members share information relating to environmental issues with their fellow students during morning assembly. Eco Club members regularly take part in painting, crafts and clay activities arranged by the Botanical Gardens team.

A Green School Programme competition was organised by the Pondicherry Education Department in March 2008. The Eco Club in Kalapet Secondary School received 2nd prize for its implementation of the programme which included: planting and maintaining a medicinal herbal garden, carrying out awareness programmes on environmental issues and keeping their school grounds clean.

Medicinal Herbal Gardens & Young Healers Programme

Twenty-five students were assisted in setting up 10 medicinal herbal gardens in their back yards. These students later took part in the Young Vaidya (Young Traditional Healer) programme. The two day programme took place at the Thamarai Centre in Edyanchavady. It provided hands-on training in the preparation of simple herbal medicines. After participating in this programme, the children can now

make seven or eight simple preparations that cure common ailments, such as colds, coughs and fever.

Young Scientist Festival

The Young Scientist Festival was organised, where a science exhibition on environmental issues, such as global warming was on display. One hundred and twenty-five schools participated, including 1,000 students, and over 700 headmasters, teachers, and trainees. A large variety of models and experiments were displayed in booths by the teachers and students. These experiments had been developed as part of the schools' Eco Education Programmes. Some students performed plays, dances and songs with themes related to science and the environment. The festival gave the students an opportunity to explore their skills, to share their models with others and to acquire deeper scientific knowledge. Around 800 people visited the exhibition and showed great interest. The Young Scientist Festival was featured in local newspapers.



Student proudly presenting his model

Shelter & Infrastructure

Twin House Prototype
Rural Technology Park



In the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, ATRRP initiated a temporary shelter programme in the villages of Bommaiypalayam, Periyamudalirachavady and Chinnamudaliyarchavady. Subsequently, ACDC focused on providing consultancy, disseminating knowledge and promoting best practices relating to existing permanent shelter programmes. ACDC also created prototypes showcasing alternative technologies.

The goal is to promote appropriate technologies for designing improved habitats, and the main objectives are:

- To develop and showcase alternative technologies
- To distribute information and provide training
- To provide planning services for future development

Achievements

Twin House Prototype

The construction of a twin house prototype, based on the Government approved area and budget was undertaken in April, 2006. The aim of the project was to promote a design and construction prototype that would showcase the following:

- A demonstration of optimum land use (within each housing plot of three cents) by building a twin house with shared walls
- To recreate the social interaction spaces of verandas and back yards along a street built according to the row housing model of development
- The possibility to provide design continuity using traditional local architecture, while incorporating modern conveniences like an internal kitchen, toilet and wash area

The Twin House Prototype also demonstrates appropriate technologies in terms of building materials and construction methods.

The responsibility for maintenance and repairs of the Twin House has been handed over to the Chinnamudaliyarchavady Kuppam Temple Trust. The units of the Twin House are being used as classrooms by the Chinnamudaliyarchavady Kuppam Primary Government School during the day, and the Chinnamudaliyarchavady Kuppam Night School in the evenings.

Rural Technology Park (RTP)

The aim of the RTP is:

- To display alternative technologies which have been developed and tested
- To revive sustainable and traditional building techniques, which are threatened by the construction industry and market forces
- To share information and provide training in different building techniques and technologies

Various technologies have been integrated in a pavilion where an exhibition is on display. The pavilion provides information and a location for live demonstrations on how to adopt these methods while building. The following building techniques are showcased at the RTP: traditional brick work, stabilised earth blocks and walls, lime plastering, Athanguri tiles, traditional oxide flooring in different shades, cyclone hooks, traditional roof work, rain water harvesting and retrofitting of existing structures.

Future Plans

In the near future, the RTP will become a centre for revitalising the art of building in the rural areas of this region. It will also provide a platform for artisans, through regular interactions with visiting experts, workshops and training opportunities with master artisans. It is hoped that the RTP will also expose women and youth to these techniques and technologies.

Health, Hygiene & Sanitation

Decentralized Waste Water Treatment
System
Preventive Health Education
Programme



Decentralized Waste Water Treatment System (DEWATS)

The Government Primary school of Kulilapalayam did not have adequate sanitation facilities for the student body. The results of this were an increase in health related problems such as waterborne disease, dehydration, and kidney and bladder infections.

ACDC's intervention included the construction of a Decentralized Waste Water Treatment System. ACDC also organised educational programmes to create awareness and to train students and teachers. The primary goal for the Kulilapalayam Primary School project is the implementation of an appropriate sanitation facility.

DEWATS is an approach that uses several processes to treat and dispose of wastewater (sewage). DEWATS was selected as the most suitable technology for the school because it collects, treats and reuses or disposes of the wastewater. Moreover, the treated wastewater can be safely returned to the environment without polluting the groundwater. Student and teacher training focused on the benefits of toilet usage, how to use the toilets & urinals and how to maintain them. ACDC collaborated with the Kulilapalayam Panchayat, which provided the water supply from the main village tank to an overhead water tank at the school.

Some facts on Sanitation in India

The practice of open defecation by the majority of people in this region is one of the most serious environmental threats to public health. Open defecation and the failure to confine excreta safely are primary factors that contribute to the spread of waterborne disease, such as diarrhoea & typhoid. As of 2004, only 18% of the rural population in India had access to sanitation facilities¹. Safe sanitation is vital for poverty reduction, as it minimises the risk of the incidence of waterborne diseases.

Preventive Health Education Programme

The Preventive Health Education Programme was initiated in November 2007, in collaboration with Auroville Health Services (AVHS). The goal of the programme is to empower local people by helping them to understand the way their own bodies work, particularly in correlation with their environment, and to give them the knowledge and necessary tools

to maintain good health. This is urgently needed, because the majority of people have health problems due to insufficient information about hygiene practices, sanitation and nutrition, and minimal access to appropriate medication and treatment.

Classes were offered which identified the causes of ill health and disease, and gave practical advice on how to re-establish and maintain a healthy system. Emphasis was placed on low cost and effective nutrition, natural remedies such as locally grown herbs and plants, lifestyle changes and basic allopathic care. The classes focused on personal and dental hygiene, nutrition, skin diseases, pregnancy, child health care, waterborne diseases, anaemia, etc.

Achievements

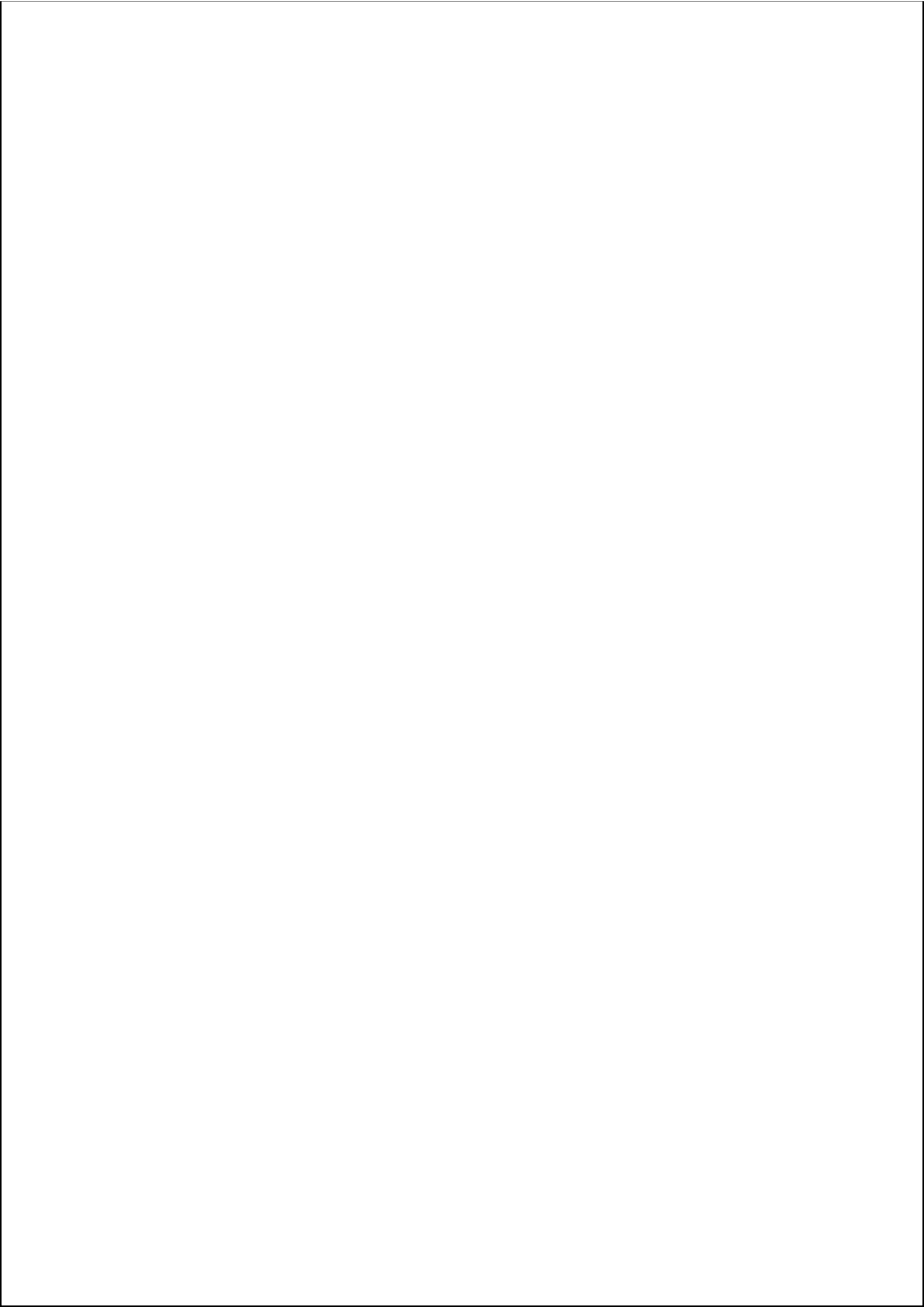
A total of 550 beneficiaries, including women SHGs, students and teachers from schools from ACDC target villages have participated in this health education programme. They value the programme, and the knowledge they have gained is shared with their neighbours in their communities, resulting in over 2,000 people becoming indirect beneficiaries of the programme. It has also had a positive impact on the beneficiaries' health and well being, with more of them being able to diagnose symptoms of various ailments. Improved hygiene also means that the participants are healthier, and as a result, spend less on medical expenses.

The Water Book a Children's Publication

ACDC, in collaboration with Auroville Water Harvest and Stichting de Zaaier (the Netherlands), have published an illustrated children's story book called 'The Water Book, Jalam and Savita's Big Voyage' in both English and Tamil. The book is designed to be used as an educational tool by teachers from middle schools in their environmental education programmes. The book tells the story of a little girl called Savita and the water spirit, Jalam. Jalam takes Savita on a voyage where she learns about water. The story begins by explaining the different forms and types of water. It describes the water cycle, and what water is used for. It stresses the importance of water, because it sustains life. The book examines water pollution and its consequences, as well as the overuse of fresh water for agriculture and industry. Jalam introduces Savita to possible solutions to these problems.

Acronyms

ACDC	Auroville Coastal-area Development Centre
ATRRP	Auroville Tsunami Relief & Rehabilitation Project
AVAG	Auroville Village Action Group
AV NCKRC	Auroville NGO Coordination & Knowledge Resource Centre
CIB	Community Institution Building
CFL	Compact Fluorescent Lamp
CSR	Centre for Scientific Research
DEWATS	Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems
DRC	District Resource Centre
ECOSAN	Ecological Sanitation
EA	Economic Assistance
EM	Effective Micro-organisms
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
LIC	Life Insurance Corporation of India
MSHG	Men Self Help Group
NCC	National Cadet Corps
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NID	National Institute for Design
NS	Night Schools
NSS	National Service Scheme
R & D	Research and Development
RTP	Rural Technology Park
SHG	Self Help Group
SSF	Sports Sans Frontieres
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TDEF	Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WELL	Women's Empowerment through Local Livelihood
WSHG	Women Self Help Group



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