

AUROVILLE: AREAS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE WORK-FORCE

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Auroville, an intentional community, starting in 1968, situated in Tamil Nadu, South India is employing an average of almost 4000 employees from the villages surrounding it. This paper examines the results of a socio-economic survey of these employees done in the year 2000, and attempts to compare the socio-economic security of these employees who are helping to build and run this community although not permanent members of it, vis a vis that of the permanent residents of Auroville. Auroville can be described in many ways: from an attempt at learning to live alternatively, which involves getting away from existing 'institutionalised' models of functioning, getting closer to nature, to trying to find oneself through work and a consecration to the divine consciousness, and while this has been the willing choice of its residents, what does this mean to the people who come there to work everyday? Are they also expected to follow this vision, because of their involvement in the project through labour relations? In what way can Auroville continue to elicit better support and cooperation from the villages for the building of this community? Can strengthening the existing labour relations work positively towards the purpose of Auroville trying to realise human unity? What will be the implications of this in Auroville?

Auroville, an international township, is located on the Coromandel Coast in south India. It draws its inspiration from the vision and work of the renowned Indian seer and spiritual visionary, Sri Aurobindo. His spiritual collaborator, The Mother, founded the township of Auroville in 1968. The writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the specific guidelines for Auroville given by the Mother, in its Charter, are crucial for an in-depth understanding of what is trying to be achieved in Auroville, a collective experiment dedicated to human unity and international understanding.

Conditions

Most of the geographical spread of Auroville, falls within the state of Tamil Nadu, while there are small portions within the neighbouring state of Pondicherry. When Auroville started in 1968 the whole area was a barren plateau lacking local resources of water, vegetation and functional villages, resulting in a very unpredictable and poor ecosystem. It was already denuded of nearly all vegetation, and frequent wind storms and monsoon deluges stripped it further of its meagre topsoil, carving ravines as rain water poured down from the plateau into the sea. One of the aspirations of the new people was to restore this ecosystem and start building the township of Auroville and it was not long before many Aurovilians (residents of Auroville, coming from different countries) were fully engaged in tree planting, water conservation and organic farming.

The living conditions of the local villagers was precarious, living in small palm-leaf roofed huts, the population was malnourished due to lack of proper meals which usually didn't cover their daily requirement - most were eating only a gruel made of the millets which they were growing on their infertile fields. Their economy was under the subsistence level due to the lack of any enterprise, land to cultivate or local regional markets available at that time for the population of this district. The village population was scattered and very small in size with mainly older people and the young and the working population was available as labour force for larger landlords in the neighbourhood or neighbouring towns. The work of restoring the land, the construction of new settlements and the construction of Matrimandir created new possibilities of employment for the local population. Auroville sparked a variety of hopes for a better life in the minds of the villagers. Some sold their land to Auroville, responding to the call of The Mother to sell their lands to Auroville, and bought better land elsewhere; some came to work in Auroville, mostly starting as manual labourers and household helpers; some did business with Auroville, providing building materials and work teams; many learned to speak English. Since the beginning working conditions with the local population was different, it was not a relation based on castes or other systems of exploitation but as "co-employees". The existing younger population started being part of the new young community, some of them benefited from educational training, adoption or support to proceed in their future plus a friendly environment which nourished these children with elements of different cultures. Many children saw the friendly foreigners as a source of nourishment

for their hunger for education – and Aurovilians responded with schools for the children. The villagers could work hard, and also learnt new skills, a new language, new ways to live.

New ways

The early Aurovilians together with the eager-for-a-job villagers began to work together to redeem the land. Ecologically, the land was restored with bunds, tree planting, protecting and farming. Economically, the people were earning enough to improve their diet, fix their leaking roofs, and send their children to school. A Health Centre was set up to deal with the plethora of illnesses among the population. Also, as Auroville began to grow, villagers were engaged and trained in construction trades, and managerial skills were built up. A variety of small handicraft units such as incense making, needlework and leatherwork sprang up, often in Aurovilians' houses – and a large number of women learned skills; increased their family income; and confronted a new style of living. Schools for village children were set up, and some children were adopted into the Auroville community, singly or in small residential educational experiments. Now, some 38 years later, many of these children are pillars of the Auroville community.

Although Auroville did not commence with a fixed blueprint for social, economic and political development, it did commence with the implicit mandate to provide employment to the local villagers. In fact, the villagers were considered the “first Aurovilians”. In September 1970, there was misapprehension in the minds of the village people around Auroville that they were going to be evicted from their homes. The Mother approved a statement for circulation among the villages, where she mentions that *“...Because of Auroville, there will be better employment opportunities, the standard of living will improve and health, sanitation and educational activities will increase. Further, those who want to join Auroville completely will be taken as such. Auroville wants to give to each individual without any distinction of caste, community, religion or race, the opportunity to grow fully. Auroville is not merely a city but also a way of life...”*

The economy of Auroville

Auroville activities are financed by donations from Auroville residents, through income generated by Auroville business units and by international and national grants and donations. These activities are co-ordinated by various Auroville working groups (see Annex 2).

History of labour

In the year 2000, after 32 years the Auroville resident population approached 1500 from 30 nationalities while the population of the seven most adjacent villages was approximately 15,000. The overwhelming majority of Auroville employees were and are from the local villages. At this time, the 2500 acres belonging to Auroville, have been transformed into a lush green area. Comprehensive contouring and the building of small check-dams have significantly enhanced the life-support potential of the whole area, conserving soil and water. Over 2 million forest trees, fruit, and fuel trees have been planted. As stated above, every activity of Auroville that started (except the Matrimandir that did have the blueprint from the Mother), came out of a need for primarily making the barren plateau of land habitable and then towards building the township – this ranged from digging wells, making shelters, growing and preparing food collectively, afforestation and ecological regeneration, schools. In the process of the physical work for the environment, Auroville's development is inextricably intertwined with that of more than 20 villages that are situated in the same area, which were once classified as backward by the Tamil Nadu government. This has taken the form of providing a steady means of livelihood for villagers from the very beginning for the above activities which were therefore mostly manual in nature.

From the Study of Industries in Auroville, after the abolishment of the zamindari systems, people were gatherers and settlers and foraged on wasteland shrubs. The area used to be a scrub jungle many years ago containing an abundant variety of species of trees, plants and medicinal shrubs and a rich fauna., but the result of more than two hundred years of deforestation, overgrazing and bad land management practices by the local settlers, left the land with no trace of bio-diversity apart from a few palm trees and banyan trees. The local area did not have any traditional craft, nor any tradition of weekly markets, which

is a usual phenomenon in tribal and rural settlements and which acts as an institution, where innovation, information, knowledge and culture is shared apart from material transactions.

Two types of people work in Auroville – those that work on land - digging, planting, gardening; the others who work in units/enterprises (which are service or productive). There were several reasons why enterprises were set up in Auroville: after the afforestation program was well on its way, Aurovilians engaged themselves in arts and crafts of their own interest and some of them established enterprises. In the philosophy of Auroville, business is included as a part of the Auroville experience, the joy of working with one's own hands and developing beautiful and quality items. Also the western Aurovilians did not want to go abroad all the time to earn money so they could then live in Auroville. To avoid this they began with small enterprises based on their own liking and knowledge, often on a very small scale. To fulfil the needs of the community, food-processing enterprises were set up known as service units. For example the bakery, jam-jelly and cheese-making units were established to provide for community consumption. In some cases the vision was specific, of making Auroville self sufficient in say, energy and hence establishing an enterprise. Some business units had been started as an exclusive support unit for social programs (education of girl child, afforestation, health).

The Auroville enterprises did not have a normal business approach in which a market was studied first and demand for the product was assessed and then a product was launched. On the contrary, it was the personal interest of individual entrepreneurs which was the basis of innovative and aesthetic products being made. The units had a passive approach in tapping markets, relying on the clients' word of mouth. In all the cases, high consideration is placed on the quality of product, beauty, minimal use of chemicals and development of environmental friendly processes etc.

From side of the employees, as there were no traditional arts and crafts existing, skilled and semiskilled labour was not available. On the positive side, a large pool of employees was available as hardly any economic opportunities existed. The entrepreneur's had to train these employees from scratch. Since most of the units are craft based requiring stitching, knitting, painting, embroidering skills etc. gradually women were more successful than men.

From the side of markets, there was no potential in the beginning in the local market. The population of Auroville was really small and there was no chance of market amongst local villages, the nearest market was Pondicherry. Since most of the products were craft based and innovative, the local awareness was not there. Hence the focus of marketing was at the national and the international level. Another major problem was that of training and communication with the local villagers who were unskilled, particularly the units engaged in export had to develop the skills of their employees to bring their work up to export quality. In most cases, the training is given 'on the job'; according to the interest or inclination an apprentice may show in different fields, he/she is encouraged to pursue that field.

Since the beginning, Auroville entrepreneurs have lacked financial support (banking etc.), strategic or technical support from Auroville as an institution. Everything depended on the individual entrepreneur, which is also a risk for a town aspiring to be self-sufficient. Similarly, all the liabilities are thrust on the entrepreneurs and he has to fend for himself in case of losses suffered.

The units in Auroville do not use heavy machines, power looms or specialized machines and instead use labour-oriented pedal machines, handlooms, potter's wheels, etc. The process of production depends on manual labour and effort. The process consumes less energy and the products fall within the category of handicrafts. Hence industries in Auroville are labour-oriented and provide a good source of employment opportunities in the region.

Purpose of the Survey in the year 2000

This Socio-Economic Survey done in the year 2000, although primarily a census type of survey concerned with economic and demographic data, also offers a first pan-Auroville assessment of the attitudes of the employees towards Auroville itself. Investigating the relationship between the Auroville practice of generating industrial, commercial and community employment primarily for the local villagers, and employee assessments of the international project of Auroville which is growing in their midst, is Auroville fulfilling its original promise to the local residents of employment, income, better living conditions and education?

It was meant to uncover areas of concern in the village context in regards to which Aurovilians can then help. Therefore much of the survey is focused on issues of housing, indebtedness, health, education and nutrition.

Also, the survey is meant to be redone approximately every seven years. This is a baseline survey for longitudinal measurement of Auroville's effectiveness in helping the neighbouring villages to develop and prosper over time.

The major categories of the survey instrument were demographics, family composition, education, housing, land holdings, livestock, ownership of electronic media, patterns of household consumption, finance, nutritional patterns, health status and health services utilization, patterns of expenditure, assessment of working conditions, and assessment of Auroville.

From the results of the survey, the issues of income, housing infrastructure (toilet), health expenses, indebtedness, and satisfaction with work became more significant than the others and hence this paper will reflect on these issues alone. Cultural diversity and its complexities will be highlighted between that of Auroville and its locale.

Spread over 58 specific places (Towns, villages or habitations), from where the employees come for work, we see more than 60% of them coming from 8 villages closest to Auroville (within 5 kms radius).

Gender, Age, Occupation

From the distribution of gender we see that there are 53% men and 47% women – while Auroville provides an equal opportunity to both men and women and has broken existing patterns of disparities in the local Indian society (where women did not step out of their villages for work), there has not been major steps in affirmative action towards a deliberate employment of more women. This has been due to several factors – women have automatically turned up for work due to very harsh conditions in the homes for food and hence didn't necessitate any affirmative measures; women who earlier used to spend eight hours in a day gathering and picking twigs for firewood, could do it within half an hour, because of the afforestation efforts of Auroville, where the menfolk were employed. This free women work-force became a resource for the handcraft industries of Auroville and as per the experience of every entrepreneur, women were found to be more attuned for finer works like embroidery, design, knitting, painting etc. than men. They were found to have ample patience and perseverance to learn, easier to work with, more sincere in their work and they constitute a major part of work-force in most of the industries other than in gardening, manual labour, or especially in construction work for the physical construction of the township, which has suddenly increased during the last 5 years (1995-2000). Thus in the context of establishment of handicraft industries in Auroville, a linkage is established with the local geography, people and resources.

Looking at the age profile of men and women who work, also looking at the occupations in which women are employed most are in handwork like knitting, and housework (servants, cooks, sweepers) and all these jobs are unskilled or semi-skilled. Hence these women are the first to leave employment when family demands require their presence at home – either looking after grandchildren, or tending to cattle, and for handicraft jobs which require dexterity in hands and eye-sight, younger women will perform better and more efficiently and hence the unit will prefer hiring them and terminating the older ones. In these sectors which are 'informal', there are not much formal labour rules that govern their work, as much as the formal productive sector, except the moral obligations to deploy fair practices. Hence after 40 years of age there will be a dramatic reduction in the female work-force and 87% of women employees are in the age of 15-40. This is 80% for men. Hence higher impermanency of jobs when you are unskilled or at most semi-skilled and are above 40 years and when they loose their other jobs, creates worry and fear. This has been reflected by employees 51% who do not like Auroville because of its job impermanency. Further there are no old-age benefits for these employees after 60, and it is because of this that **SEWA -Small Employers Welfare Administration**, (nothing to do with SEWA Ahmedabad) has started its scheme in the 1990s to make compulsory savings for employees (employees, employer), that will give them some savings money (retirement fund) whenever they finally leave work from Auroville. Such employees are not part of the mandatory Govt Provident Fund schemes which are used in formal work- sectors of Auroville. Schemes of SEWA are not used widely by all sections of Auroville employers because it is a voluntary scheme and implies a 10% increase over the wages has to be compulsorily put into savings and sometimes this works out to a lot of expenses for individual employers on farms who have 6-7 employees and also many employees do not want to make this savings of 10% which could be due to reduced purchasing capital left as a residue to meet the day-to-day expenses or

because this money will come to them only at the time of retirement (or when they stop working completely in any place in Auroville) or it is not available during emergency needs of social obligations or they don't trust that they will get their money back.

Caste

From a distribution of more than 50 caste group they belong to, we see the emergence of the dominant group of this area – Vanniyars who are represented by almost 66% of the work-force followed by 16% by SC and ST (Dalits) and the remaining 17.5% represented by small numbers of different caste groups. This ratio of workforce distributed as major groups like Vanniyars and Dalits is in keeping with the general demographic profile of this area (bioregion) - and can be verified from demographic figures of population. It should be mentioned here that Auroville has never paid attention to the innumerable class/caste ramifications of the local Indian society (largely because of what is its intention – ie to go beyond race class and caste, and also because the majority of people in Auroville are non-Indian and do not have a deep understanding of the social structure of this society), which is a big positive step, in making sure that any person has equal opportunity to work, regardless of which social identity he conforms to. This has led to positive results in the prevailing local society by much economic progress for the socially excluded castes who were earlier subjected to forms of bonded and exploitative relations to the upper/wealthier sections.

Income from work in Auroville

Income is an issue that can be looked in further detail –there are more male employees at higher income slabs. This is in keeping with educational levels of men and women and also types of occupations of men and women (more skilled for men and more unskilled for women). However this is an intervention area where Auroville could enforce new norms and practices that allow for training especially for women as skilled employees, through training centres. But wages in general are much lower for women. It is well known that any employee trained in Auroville, is highly regarded for their skills outside. If the social structures of the local society prefer that men go for work (and women are home-keepers) and if these jobs are eligible and done by women then there could be an unfavourable bias against men – for this, one of the main intervention areas is to help people become entrepreneurs and hence they do not need to rely on Auroville for all their employment. While in 1970, there was circular regarding increase of employment opportunities to the villages, the Mother has in other instances expressed that there should not be hired/paid employees in Auroville, if this is to be a self-supporting township, although she did approve of a labour housing colony, which probably meant that for large numbers of construction employees who were needed to build the township. Moreover in May 1972, Mother signed the guidelines for setting up industries in Auroville, where she did envisage hiring people as specialists, for a temporary period, until residents of Auroville, were capable of doing this job. The fact that Auroville has so many employees (and mostly unskilled and semi-skilled-65%), today, means that we have moved away from this intent of a self-supporting township, but manual tasks (land-based) which had to be done needed labour and over a period of time, this labour has come to stay and after the Auroville Foundation Act, it has become the inevitable duty of Auroville to look after the welfare of its work-force (in terms of employment standards and all the related security measures).

Although Auroville didn't start with plans for development of its neighbourhood, during all this time, development has been taking place simultaneously from acts of charity and good-will in the beginning and growing towards more planning over the years in the areas of education, health, housing, loans, water, roads, toilets, etc. This is besides the economic development that has happened in this region due to employment. Now it is a concern after 35 years, to find out in which direction the vision and planning of Auroville will go in the next 10 years to estimate what will be the impact for not only its residents but the larger bio-region.

If we classify the people working in the formal sector - commercial and services and informal sector - village contract and domestic/community/farm/ forest employees, we find that formal service sector which hires white collared jobs and is funded by donors and projects pays the maximum income of Rs1889, followed by the formal commercial sector with Rs1695 where wages are met from production.

Both these sectors include benefits like Provident Fund, gratuity, etc and hence the above averages are only incomes reported by employees (not taking into consideration the employer's contribution). The informal service sectors (domestic, community, farm employees) are paid from the 'income' of Auroville residents (who are either maintained by the central economy or are self-maintaining) and hence the wages are usually much smaller -Rs1312 (here the SEWA scheme of savings will be operational for at least 50% of them). The village contract employees who are mainly construction employees get paid the most (Rs1900) and but have no job reliability, while the informal production sector of cooperatives or piece-work get paid the least Rs733 (they are not full time employees), and also do not get any benefits. Certainly it is felt that the commercial sector can pay higher wages as the wages are being met from production – there are 35% of employees in this category. Women's wages in general will have to be increased, but particularly in the formal commercial sector and village contracted construction.

One of the most significant outcomes has been the emergence of local entrepreneurs. In many instances, local villagers, having worked in Auroville industries, have developed the confidence to set up their own industries. But we do not have any figures about this.

From the area of preferences and satisfaction levels of the employees, which reflects what they have felt about not just their unit where they work, but also about Auroville, more than 50% of them are fairly satisfied with their wages, 28% complain about their wages. Fairly satisfied here means that they don't complain, but they are not happy about it, while only 19% are happy about it. But looking at the income distributions of the employees, we find a positive significant (though weak) correlation between their satisfaction from wages with their wages itself.

There is an overall feeling that Auroville's income scales are lower compared to the central/state govt scales and is often a subject of criticism from the outside, but Auroville never has intended to become a welfare state looking after the welfare of its employees like a normal employer would – moreover money would have to be balanced with work environment, leave, bonus, concern over welfare of employee's children, health and other intangibles. When looking at these issues of work environment in Auroville, whether they are physical conditions of cleanliness, hygiene, non-polluting, or psychological conditions of good relationships between co-employees or with the management, Auroville does rate much higher on the job satisfaction scores (more than 70%), over the conditions of leave, benefits, rewards.

Total incomes

Just in terms of volume of money that is paid to employees every month from Auroville, we arrive at the figure of Rs. 56 lakhs (5.6 million) for 3709 employees and from the information obtained from the individual employee on their family earnings we arrive at figure of Rs120 lakhs (12 million) for 3709 families (7707 working people across a total population of 17516) – ie we assume the 6.4 million comes from other working places.

Besides this income from work, the people have income from land, livestock.

When employment is regularly available in Auroville (for unskilled and semi-skilled) work and due to this there is less labour available in the villages for agricultural work, the tendency is either to hold onto your land which can be still highly money-productive through cash crops (that don't require much input, except application of very toxic chemicals 2-3 times per year), or use speculation of land prices to get good money returns (in 1968, land price was Rs. 300 per acre and that price has become an average of Rs. 240, 000 by the year 2000). Many private Indian companies would like to have their holiday resorts close to the ecological lush and green Auroville, without much connection to the *raison d'être* of Auroville. This has helped in land prices shooting up and also has called for a lot of panic amongst the Auroville planners and forced precautionary measures by the Govt.

From agricultural income and livestock, the entire population earns another Rs. 11 lakhs per month.

Money wise, the total of the above incomes can be calculated to be Rs. 131 lakhs for 3709 families of 5 members of which 2 are working members – this means monthly household income is Rs.3500, which is twice the BPL figure for rural India (Rs. 1750). And hence this population is not considered poor. The following paragraphs will describe a little more about the living conditions.

Toilets and Housing

For those with salaries more than 3000 per month, 50% of them have pucca (concrete roofed) houses while those with salaries less than 3000 per month, more than 50% live under thatched roofs (huts).

Looking at the issues of infrastructure the only relevant information at the outset is that of toilets – Auroville has very high sanitation facilities; however if we take all the neighbouring 8 villages from where 60% of the work force come, an average of only 7-8% employees have houses having toilets. One can argue that these villages have open spaces like most villages and hence no problem of space for defecation; however it should also be noted that hygiene care and conditions in Auroville has a very important priority and this priority has not trickled down to the neighbouring villages because it is not a priority for the villager (66% of the neighbouring village employees have huts and not pucca houses) – But we would now have to categorise the population and we find that amongst these 8 villages 44% of employees with pucca houses have toilets. And hence, the first target for sanitation/toilets would be the remaining 56%. There are also 50% employees coming from villages further away from Auroville living in pucca houses without toilets, while for those employees from Pondicherry, 90% of the owned pucca houses have toilets.

Most of the employees from villages have household electricity and all have public water supply (some houses in Pondicherry with individual water supply).

Indebtedness

1. Loans and repayments

This was one of the other factors that was highlighted in the results – 30% of the employees take loans for family functions like marriage, death, puberty functions, 30% for building and repairing houses (here this refers to replacing keet roofs for huts and constructing rooms in pucca houses) – in this, amongst the pucca house owners, 41% loan is taken for house purposes, while 23% goes for social functions, and amongst the hut dweller, this is 26% and 32% respectively. Another major category for loan taking is for medical, survival needs, purchase of consumables and this is 25%. These loans are taken 63% from friends, relatives, nidhis (small financial institutions), pawn-brokers, chit funds; 20% from moneylender; 10% banks; 5% working place (as advance)

There are hardly any Self Help Groups in this area, or if there were, it was not being used effectively by the employees.

When **loans are taken for surviving**, this means they do not have the money to spend at home for food, medical expenses – they are caught in a trap and need to borrow money for these essentials – they are repaying interest amounts to money lenders and for this also they have to borrow again. The figures show that the indebtedness of Auroville employees is Rs. 428 lakhs, their monthly interest paid is Rs. 10 lakhs, while their monthly income is Rs. 131 lakhs (of the Auroville employees and their working family members, plus incomes from land and livestock) – ie **8% of total monthly incomes goes to pay interest amounts (not even repaying the loan)!**

Chit funds : We see this as a very important borrowing-saving activity that people are involved with. Although one could also consider this chit funds as a savings scheme, it still means that on an average Rs. 6 lakhs is not available for consumption expenditure (food) in that month – this is approx 4.5% of total incomes of employees and their families (Rs. 131 lakhs). But this Rs. 6 lakhs is usually rotated within the Auroville employees, because these schemes are generally joined by employees. Usually chit funds are being used for borrowing for socio-cultural obligations (marriages, festivals, religious events) and capitalize on the dire-need of the member and does not reflect a socially equitable means of borrowing/lending.

2. Health expenses

Another expense that becomes part of their indebtedness is health and not only is morbidity a matter of concern, but the fact that they would end up spending **9%** of their total income (Rs. 12 lakhs) every month on health expenses (hospitalization) – here, comes the crucial aspect of can Auroville not provide a medical insurance for employer and family? Either Auroville can make health insurance payments for employees and families through partial or full payments to private/govt insurance agencies and make the employees responsible for having independent contact with doctors of their choice; and/or strengthen the existing Auroville health infrastructure available so that people can make better use of it. One can strengthen health centre facilities in Auroville so that the outreach is more (now only 60% of employees

go the Auroville HC, and the rest complain about long distances and payments as reasons why they don't go there; of the ones who go, only 43% find the services Good). However the moral hazard is high when you are insured for health – that you want to go to a hospital for every symptom and because you are covered, but also you don't want to make any effort to change conditions that affect symptoms. This will be a major stumbling block (ideological) for Auroville planners/ health staff to promote such an insurance coverage, plus Auroville itself makes much focus on preventive and alternative health, while villagers prefer curative health. The Health Centre of Auroville will not be recognized by the Govt/insurance authorities and plus the services it offers will be not be of the standard of a hospital that is required by insurance companies; so another possibility of collective savings of employers on behalf of the employees, and using the services of the Auroville Health Fund (as in the cases of residents of Auroville) will not work when the numbers of savers are limited (insurance companies have large numbers of clients, not just 5000) – it has worked for Auroville residents, because their attitude towards curative health is very different from that of the villages and their high preference for alternative therapies like homoeopathy, massage, chiropractics, healing which are practiced within the township by its residents. Just linking up the employees with the insurance companies for direct relationship with just an administrative support from Auroville is a possibility. It may be possible that preventive health care is done regularly and periodically by the Auroville Health Centre and the curative health is tied up via an insurance company to services outside Auroville.

3. Social and cultural obligations

- Another indebtedness is because of social obligations and approximately Rs. 12 lakhs per month is spent on this – ie **9%** of total monthly income! Under this, marriage takes the priority (of relative or friend) where they spend 8 lakhs cash on gifts and for travel; followed by 1.5 lakhs on death ceremonies for friends or family; followed by other social events like puberty, temple, ear-piercing, etc.
- This above expense is different when the marriage is part of the family (not that of a relative or friend) – this figures show that in a year approx 200 lakhs is being spent on marriages of family members, from a total annual income of $131 \times 12 = 1572$ lakhs (**13% month**)
- Pilgrimages, temple festivals amount to 24 lakhs per year, and hence it is 2 lakhs per month (**1.5%**)
- Festivals regular – 50 lakhs per year – ie 4 lakhs per month ie **3%**

The local Indian culture of the villages can be characterized as social-religious. This means that the relationship with neighbors and the invisible world is prioritized over the relationship with the physical world and one's self. The identity and personality is manifested in the internal sensitivity, which feels its way in the cosmic and social structure. This is so in order to identify one's right place and role and adapt oneself to the existing society. This refined attitude will bring about spiritual happiness and peace.

It can be observed that all the above 4 items have taken a very big priority on their lives and people go out of the way to borrow money for these purposes at high interest rates, mostly unaware of the economics of borrowing.

Hence Rs. 56 lakhs from Rs. 131 lakhs is used for payments and purchases which are not the daily food expenses – Rs. 75 lakhs (57%) remains for food, education, transport, clothes, repairs. This means an average of Rs. 2000 is available for this per family of 5 members where at least 2 people are working. This figure is above monetary poverty defined @ levels below Rs 1750 per month per household.

Auroville as an employment provider

Looking at the way Auroville's activities have metamorphosed over the years and thereby the simultaneous development of the villages indirectly through employment and directly through 'outreach' programs in education, health, infrastructure development, we do see a monetary progress in the local population.

However even if people are not poor money-wise, and there is a regular source of income and small land holding (if any), but due to lack of savings to meet any emergency needs or social obligations, they are permanently in a debt-cycle from money-lenders. This coupled with the highly conspicuous consumptive lifestyles has brought in the element of alcoholism and domestic violence. Income levels have increased, family sizes have reduced, but unhealthy reliance on cultural and social mores like dowry, excessive purchase of gold and fixed assets (at the cost of education or health or nutrition) or excessive spending during ceremonies or festivals, have made people more dependent on the money-market.

Also a household is not able to use the endowments to preserve a minimal livelihood when it is landless, or has only labour as an endowment and maybe faced with a sudden loss of job, or sudden death/ health crises, or high shooting prices of essential commodities. This may result in heavy borrowing, thereby leading to its associated deprivations.

The limitations of looking only at the economic growth of a group, and thereby deriving what is its state of social well-being – are 1. incomes are not distributed equitably (large ranges as can be seen in the survey) 2. variations of income over time (sudden job loss, health crises in family, crop failures, market fluctuations); 3. personal/private income doesn't not guarantee the essential things reqd like hospitals, schools (only the state is able to have efficient delivery mechanism). 4. the income aspect overlooks the capabilities of the individual being valued -where poverty is the deprivation of capabilities, that lead to the inability to function in society; these functionings maybe physical (nourishment, clothing, shelter, ...) – less-scarce in the case of Auroville employees, but more lack of social achievements of participation, empowerment, sensitization, etc – that is also indirectly responsible for alcoholism, domestic violence, suicides, because of frustration, change in life-styles and rapid economic growth. This could be a process where traditional, informal, family based systems of security are eroded by commercialisation, monetisation, labour mobility (esp of women), and eroding family/kinship ties.

Work within Auroville

Now looking at what is happening within the Auroville community for its own residents, the focus has been on non-monetary forms of well-being and hence there is lot of investment in social capital – Aurovilians don't earn salaries (they are technically called **voluntary workers**), but **most** are maintained by the central economy of Auroville that allows a cash and kind component – but the emphasis has been to move to a cash-less economy as much as possible; however this is difficult when the relations of Auroville are with the outside world (as what has been always intended) and also that Auroville is not a fully self-sustaining community, even in terms of basic needs of food, clothing or shelter. There is no salary that is based on the work of an Aurovillian and the qualifications to do the work, but regardless of the service that the person renders the community, they will be maintained at a basic level. (In many cases people work in more than one place and still get a single maintenance). The exceptions are people working in the commercial sector – ie the entrepreneurs, who get maintained by that enterprise, at more than the basic levels; and then there are self-supporting Aurovilians who do not need to be maintained by the central economy because they have their 'own' sources of income that allows them to offer their work to the community, but not be expected to be maintained by it. These two categories of people (except the ones completely relying on the central economy), are also paying a contribution (tax) to the central economy which also survives on one-third the profits from the commercial sector, the contributions of people (as listed before), donations from individuals, contributions from projects (which are coming as donations and grants from outside), interests from deposits. This allows the central fund to allocate the resources for maintenance of people, education, infrastructure, services, etc. There is no type of labour linkage of Aurovilians to their work – and hence the norms of salaries, PF, leave, bonus, gratuity, that exist for the employees do not hold good for Aurovilians. The motivation to do work and be responsible for it, is the core, without remuneration and benefits (with some basic norms of timings/work hours), specifically for this work (although in practice people do associate their work-places as the source of their maintenance). This also allows a lot of mobility between work (and thus turnover), but it also

addresses the issue that *...work would not be there as the means of gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which on its side would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work...*(A Dream, The Mother, 1954). But for many Aurovilians, this maintenance is not sufficient for meeting their requirements especially for higher education of children, travel, recreation, purchase of assets like a computer, etc. So every 2-3 years, western Aurovilians go to visit families outside (outside India), where they earn some money doing part-time jobs for 3-6 months, or take things to sell and in this way they are able to make up for the lack within Auroville. This is possible only for people going to Europe/UK/USA and is not a choice for Asians or Indians. The only insurance available for the community is called the Health Fund (a collective monthly savings of Aurovilians from their maintenance allowance, with a specified set of rules), which arose out of a need when people had high medical expenses for illnesses that could be treated only outside Auroville, and then the central economy which was always paying for this, could not cover it anymore. So far there has never been any other form of insurance (either individually or collectively), except vehicle insurance (for 2 wheelers) against accident and theft (this is an individual choice). This is a voluntary scheme and health as a service is available at subsidised costs (whether or not you have joined the Health Fund), just like food, clothing, electricity. In a sense, the concept of insurance is an area of resistance for Auroville residents as a collective (individually one is free to decide) who came away from societies to live 'alternatively', where this could be taken to mean 'a positive faith and trust in the "Divine"'; this means that risks are part of this adventure, and artificial means to reduce risk from all sides of life, means a lesser level of 'surrender' to the above faith. There has been the feeling (till late), that emergency needs of the individual would be taken care of by the community.

But for the employees, while in the past, there has been help coming from the individual employer, during an emergency need (death, illness, etc), these acts get more difficult, when the need of the employee gets changed over time (now it is more needed for marriage, higher education, purchase of assets) and the number of employees have risen in the last 10 years, and there is a lesser one-to-one relationship.

Depending on what plans that Auroville has for its development and growth in the next 10 years, will be related to what will be the role of development of villages in this region, and also taking into account that India is growing at a much faster rate than the very slow economic growth of Auroville and because of this there will also be independent development taking place. Does Auroville want its growth to be based on labour intensive initiatives? For how long will the construction of the city to inhabit the potential 50,000 people take place? Will growth rate of employment of village population get tapered off after this? Regardless of what we envisage as development plans for the future, we could also see how to enhance the existing services so that they have a deeper level of reach that is more long-term and sustainable. While Auroville has depended largely on the local population for its growth and development, a major portion of the latter have become dependent completely on Auroville for their life. In that sense there is a symbiotic relationship, although what is being nurtured by this relationship may be different things and maybe conflicting.

Using the concept of decent work for the employees of Auroville (the workers from the villages) entails good remuneration, social protection measures, dialogue and rights, how should Auroville combine what it needs to do for the area in terms of better labour relations, when neither does it promote remuneration nor any social protection measures at a collective level for its own residents? **It means that every Aurovillian is working for the community which indirectly means that they are working to provide for the people in the region.** Will there be any conflicts of interest here? How much priority is the life of the villager as part of the goals of Auroville. Does the work of villagers here allow them to have a decent living, which involves elements which fall outside the sphere of employment (like health, education, security). We will concentrate on security, as this is the area where least intervention has been done by Auroville – **as employment providers, are we looking into the development concerns of the population that involves adequate socio-economic security measures for the present? And what would this represent?**

A. Socio-economic security for its current employees:

The villagers have not been expected to accept the ‘surpassing’ of cultural, creed, class divides, because they have not ‘joined’ the experiment of Auroville and therefore not needing to accept the inherent ideologies. And it is most important to note that while there has been a lot of goodwill from the side of the villages towards the project of Auroville in terms of their cooperation (even if it has been mostly gainful), this reason should not be stretched, so that Auroville appears as a place of exploitation of the local people (cheap labour); there have been from time to time, upsurges of conflicts especially in the area of land and rights over use of land, selling of land to speculators, resentment over losing jobs. Plus, the only modus of resolution of conflicts is through SEWA, as there are no labour unions, besides which they could go to court (but which involves time, effort, money); another recourse is the local press, which publishes from time to time, the scoop on Auroville, but in general, SEWA has been able to deal quite successfully with the conflict mediation related to work.

Here can we focus on employment related forms of insecurity which is work-related like unemployment insurance, occupational hazards, old-age cover or pensions, work-related conditions, education of children, health not just for the formal commercial sector employees, but for the informal sectors as well? These measures would pertain to not only the poorer workers but to all workers of Auroville. And then we come to the issue of ‘basic’ coverage, which is as difficult to determine as is the basic needs of the residents of Auroville are. How is this to be covered? Develop insurance mechanisms for the employees, based on groups formed for this purpose; or employees pay small premiums and the rest is topped up by the employing unit? Using the involvement of experienced NGOs as partners (like Self-Employed Women’s Association -Ahmedabad or DHAN- Madurai), or revive traditional systems of security /arrangements (if any) that are dormant.

When asked about their satisfaction about their jobs and with Auroville – they are happy with their work for its cleanliness, safety, support from co-employees and good relationship with employer, but unhappy about promotion facilities, insurance, avenues for further learning, creativity, new skills (jobs are repetitive), and not happy about their wages. When asked what they like most about their unit of work, a third of them said it was their job, while more than 70% of them said that they disliked ‘nothing’ (to show that they are happy?) in their place of work. But regarding Auroville itself, most like it as a place of peace (probably devoid of local village politics, physical abuse, social exclusions on the basis of caste, gender), and a lot think of it as a place of high job opportunities, a place with beauty (and cleanliness) a third are happy about its punctuality/discipline and village development efforts. But many of them dislike Auroville itself for the low wages and job impermanency, but their concern is also about cultural degradation (and therefore maybe lack of respect?) – The Indian culture is in the midst of the socio-cultural change and such a process is accompanied by various conflicts. This process has been accelerated in the locality of Auroville. For example, tension between traditional values and modern ones can introduce intra-personal conflicts as well as inter-personal ones, such as those between generations. However, such a change can also cause social conflict, and cause inner traumas that still may not be manifested externally. This has been expressed in not so many words, in the survey, when people talk about cultural de-gradation – where they mean, living relationship patterns are challenged within the household, codes of behaviour like dress codes, easy mobility for women to travel by vehicles to work/to shop in the city, less restricted relationships between the opposite sexes due to work circumstances and therefore more pre-marital relationships or love-marriages, forms of communication in the language (that implies a lack of respect), etc.

When skills are limited and Auroville is not a Govt body (and is unique in its statute, but having to follow Govt directives for employment of people from India), plus the growth rate of Auroville is much slower than that by the employees and the village population, economies of scale may not be able to support more jobs beyond a limit; The concept of Auroville is neither a capitalist society, which is how people from outside may look at it. It is not in the external market, nor a cooperative, it doesn’t invest in any external economies– it is a made-to-order economy (it makes bread, sells it, buys wheat, pays labour, makes bread and sells again...). Further, most of these jobs which are in the commercial sector are handicraft-cottage industries which have become bigger and formal over the years and produce incense, candles, clothes, shoes, etc. So far there has not been threat of competition from other producers for such

‘quality’ products in the global market (where most of it is sold – exports), but neither is there more product diversification beyond a threshold. After a certain stage in the globalization process, such quality products and even better ones will be produced by China and other nations and then it is no longer possible to compete at the same rates. So these commercial units would have to change their strategies, diversify, and restructure; this might mean that a lot of the so-far un- and semi-skilled employees will become redundant, if their skill bases are not expanded. This might make them vulnerable to deprivation in the future. Auroville has the freedom of closing non-productive units and laying-off employees, after compensating them; but these employees may not be capable of finding suitable jobs outside, esp those above 30 years of age, because these employees also do not have an education (very few have a 12std) worsening their risk of deprivation, and leading to further alcoholism, which at the time of the survey itself was recorded as one-fifth of employees or 30% of male employees drink alcohol regularly. This is a growing concern for social-work professionals, because family violence from drunken behaviour has been increasing, and no group like AA has been successful in this area.

The areas of interventions listed below, are areas where Auroville could think of making the relationship with the villagers more harmonious through offering wider socio-economic security measures, than the mere provision of jobs. Every one of these interventions would increase the costs to the employing unit/Auroville and there is likely to be a resistance for them. The costs for the units could increase from say 25-40% per person employed, depending on the schemes chosen (including wage increases), and the employees would have to think about savings @ 20% of their monthly incomes. An entire cost-benefit analysis would have to be done for each of these decisions. Will providing more security benefits reduce employment opportunities, because profits would be reduced between 30-50%? Or will it increase the productivity because better livelihoods are arranged. Also much will depend on the global climate for commercial handicraft-activities.

Employment – related interventions

- For formal sectors (commercial and service), making employment standards for the present more comprehensive and uniform – through yearly contracts and higher salaries and monthly payments. Also benefits that are chosen by that sector should be applied similarly.
- Wages, especially in the commercial sector (35% of employees work here) could be increased under specific terms and contracts, for skilled workers.
- In the informal commercial sector, village construction contractors would have to bring labour under more equitable rules – this can be enforced by Auroville builders. While there may not be child labour (ie below 14 years), but we should be aware that between 16-18, mostly unmarried girls working in handicraft workshops; in this age group the men are helpers to carpenters, painters, masons, and most of them are in construction related work (through village contracts). These helpers need training and education and they should be treated as apprentices and trainees and not as full-time employees, with specific emphasis on evening schools, sports and recreational facilities. While this is possible for people working directly under Auroville units (ie handicraft units), so far, nothing has been done to control and monitor village contractors who employ boys below 18, as helpers in their crew.
- The informal productive sector which is basically women doing piece work at home (eg: payment based on number of sweaters knitted), the earnings are very low – this could mean because they are doing this not as full-time jobs, but looking after their homes; here more benefits should also be given to these employees who are women.
- Giving more training to women in specific skills (like masonry) and to employ them more at skilled levels (as masons rather than helpers) within Auroville – this could be a way of offering more security to single and widowed women by reserving certain skilled jobs for women. This would also depend on how the external market (of Pondicherry) will be culturally open for such changes.
- To establish better linkages with all the village entrepreneurs who have established individual enterprises from their experience of working in Auroville – first, a database to be established via govt support and find ways and means to improve their working conditions – working hours, sanitation, water, lighting, tools, payments – ideas for a cooperative of small-scale village entrepreneurs!

Enhancing security measures:

- Old age benefits, festival/pilgrimages, marriage expenses, education of children, emergency needs of accidents, etc which are mostly planned expenditures that can be addressed by individual **savings** (then moving towards collective savings) – this would involve every unit working through a centralised administrative body like SEWA to offer a set of more schemes besides the existing Govt PF or the SEWA retirement fund. This can be done via banks, govt or private organisations. When this works as a group savings of employees attached to a unit, loans taken have a lesser moral hazard of repayment, when the employer can deduct from the salary. The amount of loan a person is entitled to, could depend on the amount saved and what are his/her entitlements from benefits from this unit. The set of benefit schemes will have to start from a small subset and slowly increase – the administrative expenses towards maintaining SEWA or other overheads could be borne by the employers.
- Unplanned expenses like death/funeral expenses, accidents, sickness, calamities (natural or man-made for self or property), widowhood that can be addressed by tripartite-**insurance** (employee, employer and company), again SEWA acting as the administrative /nodal body inside Auroville.
- Productive expenses like purchase of assets - livestock, land, expansion of business, housing and infrastructure upgrading through **loans** either from employer (for small amounts) or from banks and institutions (through employer support).
- Almost 9% of the women workers are widowed/single parents, and certain specific security measures would have to be provided for these women who are mostly the head of the family and also special concessions/incentives for education of their children, marriage of children, health needs.

Although all these interventions can be done with the help of banks, government / private insurance companies with Auroville being a nodal agency, and providing the administrative support – this means in most cases, the employer would have to bear the overhead expenditure and it also means more centralised administration measures; one can draw upon the experience of NGO's in India which are successfully administering this.

Social sensitisation measures:

- The most important is the social sensitization at all levels of interaction with employees – esp in work places and in schools, to create more general and wider awareness of environmental hazards in chemical agriculture, water conservation, hygiene; to transmit the *raison d'être* of Auroville through educational and awareness programs that could focus on the aspects of consumerism, conspicuous consumption, social-ills of culturally accepted practices like dowry, social exclusions, gender disparity, household violence. This would become the task of not just a particular group which exists (the Village Action Group) but the work ethics of every employer, in the way he/she relates to employees. This social sensitisation is a sensitisation of not the local population but of Aurovilians also to the cultural complexities of the local milieu. Giving exposure programmes by different other groups from India who are working on the above areas successfully – to take employees out for such programmes, screening movies, all done as part of their work.
- Promoting the concept of savings through micro-credit and finance groups, looking at experiences from other places – such schemes have been successful with membership restricted to women alone - this could be tried amongst groups of employees within the same unit (both sexes, or uni-sex), but would have to be associated to a larger program of mobilisation of people for social capacity building (empowerment, solidarity, participation, sensitisation), which would involve the role of specific NGO- institutional support, who have the expertise.
- Existing educational units which would emphasize more on values and make general awareness of world trends part of the curriculum; emphasis on economics of borrowing.
- Providing for the education of the children of employees in higher education, through merit scholarships, from a general Auroville fund.

Areas of intervention	formal-commercial	formal - service	informal - commercial	informal - service	village contract
Numbers of employees	1266	833	461	819	336
Average monthly wage in Rs	1695	1889	733	1312	1900
wages increase proposed	15%	7%	15%	15%	7%
type of jobs	contractual	contractual			
existing benefits such as: - PF/retirement fund, paid/medical leave, gratuity, bonus, health centre(limited coverage)	yes	yes	no	yes	no

Social security measures	type	exists/new	contribution-employee	costs	contribution-employer	costs	contribution-service provider	costs
old age schemes			10-12%		10-12%		10-12%	
retirement fund	Monthly savings	exists	10%		10%		10% (Auroville)	
govt pf	Monthly savings	exists	12%		12%		12% (EPF)	
education scheme			5%		7.5%		5-7.5-10.5%	
education of children	Monthly savings for 5/10 years	new	5%		7.5%		bank	
social-cultural scheme			3-5%		0-2.5%		5-10.5%	
marriage of children	Monthly savings for 5/10/15 years	new	5%		2.5%		bank	
festivals/pilgrimages	Monthly savings	new	3%		0%		bank	
women benefit schemes			2-3%		5-6%		5-6%	
widows	Monthly savings	new	2%		5%		5%(Auroville)	
single mother	Monthly savings	new	3%		6%		6%(Auroville)	
termination benefit scheme								
gratuity		exists			half month for every year >5 years service			
health schemes								
basic health coverage +	service	exists			25Rs/month per employee			
health -self	insurance	new	20% premium		80% premium			
health - family package	insurance	new	50% premium		50% premium			
emergency provision schemes								
accident/injury/death	insurance	new	25% premium		75% premium			
calamities	insurance	new	25% premium		75% premium			
asset generation schemes								
purchase of house/land/livestock	group savings-loans	new	10%		collateral		bank	
infrastructure development/maintenance	loans	new						

B. Socio-economic security for the future for the region:

Education-based for young employees

- One would think of making more industrial schools/training centres in the Auroville area that make people (between the ages 15-20 and they should have passed their 10th std) get skills which are needed outside (Govt certified courses), which enables young people to get jobs outside which pay more (Indian industry today pays at much higher scales technical diploma-holders); but these training schools will have to be highly subsidized and certified from the Govt. Also this would have to be done based on the Pondicherry's industrial demand for certain skills which has been increasing over the past 3 years. Another possibility here could be that Auroville gets into partnerships with other existing Govt/private agencies for running industrial schools – being attached to specific tasks in the such programs and not having to run the whole centre (curriculum development, teaching certain programs, apprenticeship module).

- A work-study program, where employees also go to study – this would be meaningful to them, only if the study segment is a certified course/curriculum of the Govt, that either earns them a degree/diploma and/or gives them better prospects of jobs outside. This means that obligatory education is part of the work. This could once again be relevant only to those who are young, dropped out of regular school after a minimum of say 8 years.
- Strengthening the academic curriculum of the existing govt and private schools in the bio-regional area so that there is a better quality in education, that doesn't make people spend much money to put their children in a private/English medium school.

Employment directions

- Auroville has been producing technology and know-how (solar, mud architecture, waste-water recycling, solid-waste management, etc), but so far it has been confined mainly in the category of scientific research; but now it could get into the commercial markets in India and would need professionals by either bringing them in or training them here specifically.
- Make people more entrepreneurs than employees in skills and trades that make them more self-reliant with access to bank loans. This could be a special programme giving preference for women entrepreneurs who are missing in this region.
- Making use of the tourism industry which is becoming an important source of Auroville's (and India's) income (particularly in the past 3 years), to develop skills more in the hospitality and health sectors – cooks, waiters, hotel managers, paramedics, nurses, physio-therapists, masseurs.

Recommendations

While 50,000 people are to be the inhabitants of this township, and Auroville is involved currently in the development of infrastructure needed for this population, as well as sustaining the life of the community, whatever be the plans of the community and the ideologies that it follows, the employment conditions of the existing work-force that allow them to be 'above' the poverty line, does not guarantee that they do not face the risk of falling into poverty, when situations arise due to unemployment, illness, high prices, calamities, etc. While the decisions to improve the protection measures, by wage increases and specific security measures, would increase costs in the short-run and maybe result in lesser employment facilities in the future, this short-run investment would result in the formation of more social capital like education (and especially of girls), better health and living conditions. This could also imply that people in the future are not so dependent on Auroville for all their employment needs, which may be provided by Pondicherry, Chennai or Bangalore.

While the above areas of interventions are some suggestions to improve the socio-economic security of employees of Auroville, and detailed cost-benefits would have to be worked out, it does highlight the following specific needs:

Surveys:

- For information that is lacking from the existing survey material, to do a longitudinal survey (stratified random sample – across sectors, gender, age, village, etc) to ask the employees to record history – before and after Auroville and ask questions related to:
 - Housing
 - education (of children?)
 - occupations
 - incomes
 - asset holdings – land and livestock
 - health - diseases and facilities
 - social practices – then and now
 - difficulties of risks and vulnerabilities - then and now

This survey should be done in 2007, to see what changes have happened in the past 7 years; people involved in conducting this survey, could be educated youth from the villages and trained to do such surveys.

The above questions could be taken over the time frame of 2000-2007.

Using this sample survey to address concepts of security through insurance, savings – what is the willingness of workers for different types of such measures.

- Every Auroville unit (formal commercial and service) that has participated in the survey in year 2000 could be contacted to see how many more or less employees, it has in 2007, and what are its current wages-costs. Only a sample of the informal sector can be done. Also the Auroville Economic Research studies data would reveal how many units themselves have folded up and how many have sprung anew in 7 years, besides the financial performance of the existing units.
- To discuss with all the employing units, the implications of wages increase or specific social security provisions, using the existing role of SEWA, for establishing this dialogue.
- A more focused interview about employees understanding about Auroville, with a small sample of employees.
- Historical information about informal lending and borrowing in this local area.
- Make an inventory of artisans/entrepreneurs who have opened their own units in this region – and to create a database (already the Government has endorsed the need for such a study with their view of reviving traditional arts and crafts).
- A survey of Aurovilian concepts regarding WORK and community building to be done in parallel to create a database, to see how employment of workers will fit into these perceptions of willing/voluntary worker (Aurovilian) versus non-voluntary workers (employees). Also from this WORK survey to be able to find out how many Aurovilians have needed to change their area of work depending on the availability of adequate maintenance (eg: from services to commercial sector).

Discussions for exploring the implementation of some security schemes:

- What are Auroville's internal needs and stands on the same issues of socio-economic security of the employees – for its own member Aurovilians (besides health insurance, which already exists)? Is there any need for any savings or insurance schemes for their old-age, calamities, travel expenses, education of children, recreation/cultural obligations, emergencies, etc?
- If more comprehensive social security measures are offered to employees, what would this mean as costs to the Auroville economy at large and the sub-economies of the commercial, service and informal sectors?
- Discussions within Auroville working groups (Planning and Development, Business Group, service units) about what should strategies vis a vis village development be on areas like employment patterns for the next 10 years – administratively and socially: numbers of employees, wages, welfare schemes for existing employees (health, pension, PF etc), training as a educational component- where can the Govt be a participant or a partner and how Auroville could link with other local industries and NGOs?
- Discussions with more organised industries in Pondicherry regarding norms of employment (small industries in the Pondicherry area – eg: shoe upper factories, electronic assembling unit, PVC mould units, etc have very poor labour regulations and many women employees who have tried working there have left and come to join the Auroville work-force).