



Thamarai Educational Projects Annual Report 2020-2021



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“Essentially, the only thing you should do assiduously is to teach children to know themselves and choose their own destiny, the path they will follow; to teach them to look at themselves, understand themselves and to will what they want to be.”

~ Mirra Alfassa

Contents

Our Vision	2
What We Do	2
Our Mission	2
Where We Make an Impact	3
Foreword	4
Our Covid Response	6
Engaging With The Children And Community	6
My Hero Is You	7
Children's Words	8
Highlights Of The Year	10
Our Facilitation Team	12
Online Classes, Our Remote Facilitators	15
Thamarai After-School	18
The Annai Nagar After-School	19
The Edayanchavadi After-School	20
Facilitators' Training	21
Leadership And Capacity Development	22
Leadership Programs In 2020-2021	23
RTL Workshop From Vasu And Savithri	23
Health and Well Being	24
Health Programs In 2020-2021	25
Building Development	27
The Learning Centre, Sports Ground Development And Future Projects	27
Inauguration Ceremony At Annai Nagar After School	29
Sports Ground	30
Thank You	31
Financial Report	32
Donations Received	32
Where Donations Come From	32
Income And Expenditure	33
What We Spent On	34
Financial Conclusions	35

Our Vision

We believe in **human unity**, therefore we work on bringing resources and opportunity to people in villages around Auroville so that they can reach their full potential and be change-makers for the well-being of their communities and the wider world.

What We Do

Thamarai (is the Tamil word for lotus flower) the project, stands for the values of fullest potential and well-being for a thriving people and planet. We engage with the villages near the International township of Auroville **since 2006**, with a series of formal and informal education projects including two **after schools** for 130 children, a **natural health care**

education program and **well-being service**, **environmental program** and **community leadership and capacity development**.

Our Mission

Our mission is to co-create an enabling environment to foster the full potential and well-being of all, particularly children.

Our objectives are the following :

- To nurture the full potential within and among children, youth and communities.
- To address the gap in mainstream education system by enabling a quality and holistic after school learning environment

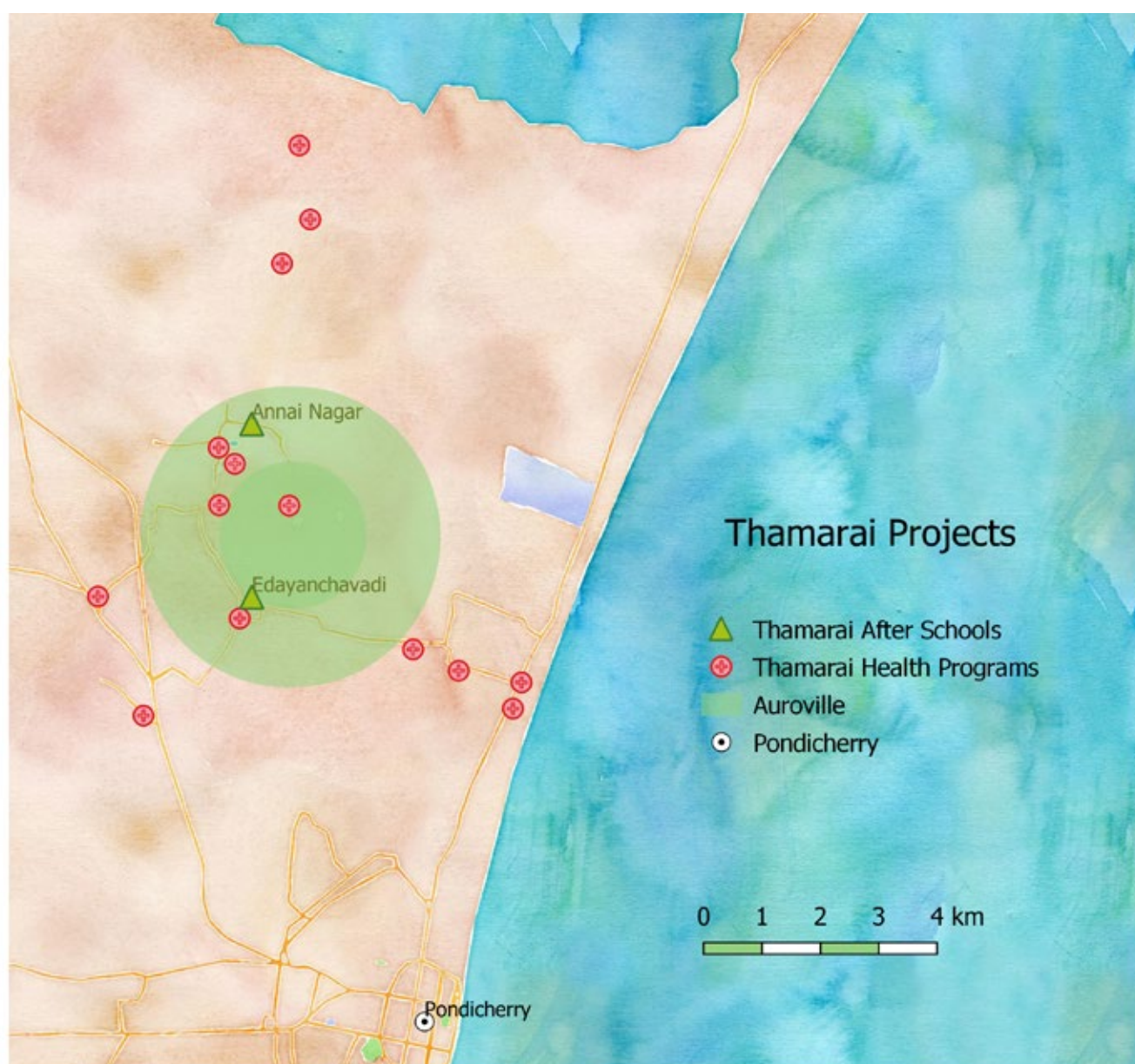


- To support the children to be active and responsible citizens and stewards/leaders.
- To co-create an enabling community environment for well-being of the people and the planet.

Where We Make an Impact

We work to create an enabling environment for education and community development

in villages surrounding Auroville which is in Vanur block, Villipuram district, Tamil Nadu. The average literacy of Villipuram district was 63.48%, (2011 census), compared to the national average of 72.99%. Our learning centres are placed in, or next to, the sections of the villages that society has marginalised. The following map shows you the location of the Annai Nagar and Edayanchavadi learning centres and the locations of the local schools that we offer annual programs to. We also provide programs to women's groups in various locations.



Foreword

At the moment of writing this, the last week of May 2021, we are bearing witness to an extraordinary moment for India as the 2nd wave of Covid 19 is hitting hard bringing the country to a halt and affecting every family. 2020-2021 has been a year of adaptation and a focused attention by our Thamarai team for full potential for everyone and to serve the needs of the hour.

We have responded by listening and co-creating the most effective service we could, with the local communities, within the constraints of the virus and the new Covid norms. It has been a time of interdependence and working to enhance well being. We have been lucky to have been able to keep the service open, although adapted, and to have a 4 month window, between lock downs, where students were back at the centre.



Online maths class

The main achievements in 2020-2021 include:

- Successfully fundraising and building the 1st stage of the new Thamarai Learning centre. Stage 1 consisted of a ground-floor classroom, playground, toilet and garden area. This development integrated many of the children's ideas.



Sportsground in Annai Nagar

- Completing a Village Sports Ground in association with the local youth club.
- Responding to the challenges of Covid 19 with an over the phone daily education program, village support desk/exhibition and the distribution of food boxes worth in total ₹4.8 lakh/€5,432/\$6,617 in partnership with Auroville Village Action Group to families most in need.
- Partnering with other organisations to provide programs and services such as educational cycle trips, well-being and dental camp and child protection, English literacy, leadership and body awareness training for youth facilitators.
- The establishment of a Thamarai and village level committee with representatives of women, village elders, youth and students.
- Enrolling national and international volunteer facilitators to share their talent that provided new skills for our children and youth in English, mind mapping, chess, guitar playing and cross cultural sharing.
- Developing new online healthcare programs for women's groups and new in-house programs such as the monthly talent show, drumming, dance, film making and graphic design classes.
- Sponsoring 3 people through de-addiction and setting up a working group to build a well-being strategy to support a reduction in

alcohol dependency.

- Supporting Youth design community projects through the (RTL) Radical Transformation workshops and the set up of working groups to achieve results.
- Strengthening our website and creating a new film.

The concrete changes we have witnessed are:

1. The strong sense of ownership the Thamarai children have about the new centre, referring to it as “our Thamarai”. Their ideas have shaped our development choices. Their commitment to saving water has driven the decision to install primarily dry toilets, grey water reuse and a rainwater catchment tank. Their commitment towards reducing the high levels of anaemia, currently 77% in our children, has guided the choice of building a good kitchen, wood fired oven and creating edible features in the garden. Their commitment towards peace and harmony has put as a priority the development of play and sports areas.



Children on the construction site

2. Increase in confidence, literacy and skills in both children and youth facilitators.

3. More cohesion in youth groups and a strong alignment towards sports.

4. The growing number of young people who are stepping forward to serve their community by offering to become facilitators in Thamarai, contributing to the development of the sports ground and envisioning other improvements for their village. These include Thamarai alumni.



Inauguration of the new building

Inequity has become more visible during this pandemic. Many parents are without work with social issues such as alcoholism and domestic violence on the increase (Survey March 2021 by Tamil Nadu Women's Collective in 62 villages indicated 81% of rural families reported some form of domestic violence).

We look to a more positive future and this coming year our energy will be focused on strengthening our programs and in completing stage 2 of the learning centre in Annai Nagar village which will include a technology room to support enhanced STEAM education.

We will also begin to envision how to develop the centre in Edayanchavadi so that it can eventually offer a similar service.

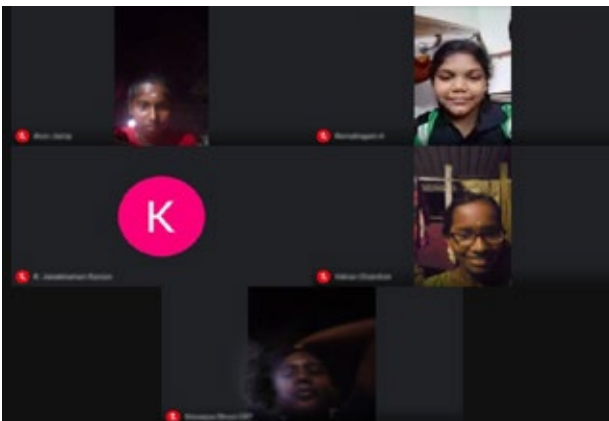
Our Covid Response

Engaging With The Children And Community

Covid 19 has shaped a continual question for us at Thamarai: how can we best serve in alignment with our core values of well being and full potential for all at this crucial time?

Our response has taken many forms:

- Providing daily learning calls, in pods of three children and a facilitator, that offer both an emotional connection and a chance to keep up with studies.



Online English classes during lock down 2

- Facilitating 481911Rs/5,405euros of food and natural immunity boosting supplies to be dropped to 600 families in need in association with the team at Auroville Village Action group during the first lockdown and a special food box to each of the children's families for Christmas.

- Creating a support desk, thrice weekly, during lock down 1 in the middle of Annai Nagar village to provide books, stationery and a healthy snack. In lockdown 2, we distribute directly to children's homes.



Distribution of natural immunity boosting supplies

- Designing and helping deliver safety protocols and health awareness programs to both children and women's groups.

- Setting up intensive online training programs for our youth facilitators so they could use this time in a positive way to enhance their career opportunities as well as help refine their knowledge to better deliver programs to children and be an emotional support.



Support desk during lock down 1

My Hero Is You

One tool that has helped us discuss Covid and its effects with our children is the book "My Hero is You". This beautifully written and Illustrated book by Helen Putuck and commissioned by IASC, supports children to understand the worldwide pandemic and



Front page illustration of My Hero is You

children's ability to be heroes by practicing habits that keep people safe as well as expanding their field of care and love for everyone.

The book is the story of Sara, who initially being afraid, asks what she can do at this time. The answer came in the form of a magical, flying dragon who takes Sara around the world to meet other children where she discovers that each one can make a difference by taking care of themselves and others, practicing being safe and spreading love for all. The book is sensitive to gender, diverse ability and

backgrounds and has wonderfully inspiring role models. Here is what some of our children had to say about the book:

Sona : "I liked the girl Sara, she is courageous and loving. I like the way she hugged her mum and how with Salem she travelled to talk to other children about Covid with a dragon. I would like to travel on a dragon to pondy park".

Hemachandran : "Sara was telling people how to be safe in coronavirus times. I liked Ario the dragon because he can fly. I would like to fly. My dream is to get 1st or 2nd rank in 10th standard next year".

Illikian : "I like Sara's mum's job, she is a scientist. My dream is to become a singer and a scientist".

Praveenkumar : " I liked that Sara went on an adventure with a dragon to a faraway place".



We have seen that our work during this time of Covid has brought connection and confidence to children and a continuity in their education. It also has brought relief to families in need with food and basic supplies. We have built awareness on personal and public safety. We will continue our efforts to respond to the needs of the people in the villages during this challenging time.

Children's Words

The children are at the core of Thamarai, their needs and thoughts help us shape the service. Their hopes and dreams for life are important to us.

Things they care about and project ideas they have worked on have been built into our new learning centre such as the choice of waterless

toilets to save water, the use of recycled waste to make doors and bricks, the addition of a kitchen/outdoor brick oven to help improve nutrition and the development of sports and play areas to enhance health and well-being. It has been a challenging year for them but they have adapted well, here are some of their comments:

"After having been home during the 1st lock down then I came to Thamarai and I saw all my friends. At that moment I was so happy. My proud moment was when I participated by singing for the open day of Thamarai in front of many people." - **Illikian, 8th standard**

"Dancing with my friends in Thamarai. It was a jolly time, we practised well for the talent show. My proud moment is first that I am a Thamarai student and I made a film in Thamarai. I was a film-maker and a dancer last year. And I learn English in Thamarai and I am proud of this." - **Sona, 8th standard**

"Opening the new building was my best moment this year. Also doing the cycle trip and being involved in our Pongal festival and all the arrangements. My proud moment in Thamarai was translating to the visitors and we all sang songs in the new building." - **Sri Waque, 8th standard**

"The first cycle trip because I was going on a bicycle, I saw nature and it was a long trip. Also when I participated in the talent show it was a happy moment because I did dancing. My proud moment was when I sang a song in the talent show, people told me I sang beautifully." - **Hasini, 7th standard**

"My happiest moment in my school opening, when I met all my friends. That was my happiest moment. My proud moment in our school each month we have speech competition, I spoke and mam and friends told me I spoke well and encouraged me." - **Sinduja, 8th standard**

"When I attended all the classes and played in the tree house. In my school one day visitors came my teacher suggest to read one poem, that time I was very scared to read that poem and it's in English. Then after I read it confidentially after that everyone appreciated it. I felt proud at that moment." - **Loshna, 5th standard**

"The Mahabalipuram trip and the talent show. I like to dance, I did some folk dancing. My proud moment was the magic show because I did card tricks that people really liked." - **Praveen kumar, 8th standard**

**What was your best/
proudest moment in
2020-2021?**

"Craft class, reading books, playing with friends. I'm proud to be a Thamarai student because the way of teaching is very good. Thamarai gives equal education for everyone." - **Jaikrish, 7th standard**

"My happiest moment in Thamarai was "Thamarai opening" and cycle trip. I'm proud to be a Thamarai student because they teach many activities. Well teaching." - **Sanjay, 6th standard**

"The Christmas celebration. I am proud to say "I'm a Thamarai student" because I have kind teachers and good friends." - **Priyanka, 6th standard**

"Playing in the tree house, the inauguration of the building was my happiest moment. One day I crossed the pond in my village, that was my proud moment and I patted my back." - **Anushka, 5th standard**

"When we celebrated annual day in our school because more people give speech, dancing and prize distribution, my proud moment : on annual day I got a prize." - **Sadhana, 8th standard**

"My happiest moment is first day of reopening in 2020 in thamarai. When others said my dance was so good when I performed in a talent show, I felt that was my proud moment." - **Agila, 7th standard**

"The 1st talent show in old thamarai. I was anchoring a talent show in Thamarai 1st time, that was my proud moment." - **Dharsha, 6th standard**

"The pongal celebration 2020 in Thamarai. I showed my craft skills in a talent show, so that's my proud moment." - **Monisha, 7th standard**

"My happiest moment in thamarai is the pongal celebration in Thamarai. I directed one movie in Thamarai, that was my proud moment." - **Vibishnan, 7th standard**



How has this Covid time been for you?

"I am not going anywhere and I am using the phone. And I am missing my friends, I am missing old Sri Waque, I am missing all of you"

"It's so boring and sometimes happy, nothing special, I do things to help my mum, nothing special."

"I don't like this Covid time because many people die."

"It's very boring and I miss my friends and people and relatives. I help my mother daily, I clean the house and I wash the clothes and I wash the dishes."

"It's bad for me because people are struggling to breathe and not getting oxygen. I am getting scared. Before Covid I would not wash my hands and not eat vegetables now I wash my hands and eat vegetables every day."

"Please open the Thamarai. We will stay safely at home. Use a mask and sanitizer."

"It was boring. When we go outside, we must wear masks. We will drink herbal drinks."

"I'm praying to God this situation should go fast because everyone is struggling."

"We drink herbal juice. Use a mask and sanitizer. Don't go outside."

"This Covid situation is very boring because school is closed."

"It makes me feel very sad because I'm not going to the Thamarai centre, I want to attend chess and dance class online."

"I wasn't able to go outside and not play sports."

"It's making me bored, but sometimes I feel happy when the rain comes."

"I missed my school and friends. I feel online classes are going well at this Covid time."

Highlights Of The Year

August
2020



Presentation of India's New Education Policy to the team



Support desk in Annai Nagar village twice a week



Inauguration of the Edayanchavadi after-school



Isora gave an "awareness through body" workshop to team



Shalini and Sanjeev give the children a training on Anapana meditation



Pongal celebration with games and cooking the "sweet pongal"



Cycle trip to Perumukkal with 24 children

2021

Christmas camp with dreamcatchers, origami, and a child went home



Swapnil starts his online weekly mindmapping classes



Hedia starts the weekly percussion classes



Manikandan starts his online weekly maths classes



Children's first talent show



Architect volunteer fired oven for children



Children's second talent show



Physical education program in a school in the surrounding area of Auroville



Trip with the children to the Kalvarayan hills



Cycle trip with the children to Kazhuveli

10 APRIL
2nd lock down in Tamil Nadu

Thamarai is continuing education for children



Children with daily 2 hour online learning calls...

Our Facilitation Team



learning how to use Photoshop. Overall, I learnt

This year was a very new and difficult year. I learnt how to live in a Covid pandemic; I learnt how to set up, organise and take classes online; and I learnt 'Awareness Through the Body (ATM)' concentration activities. I am also

that when we face crisis, human beings support each other.

I have grown personally and professionally. I have developed my ability to manage a team and learnt how to get support and to help others when needed. My English speaking has improved, and I can see a change in confidence within me. I now feel more able to take courageous action in my participation.

- Jagadeshwari



My greatest learning this year was in English, as well as learning to understand the children better and facilitating classes. I also learnt some tricks to teach mathematics in an easier way.

My teaching capacities have grown this year. I have been working with one boy who was scared to speak in any language. I was able to motivate him to try Tamil, and then slowly start learning English too. Now he is speaking much more than he was last year. I also feel like my relationship with all the children at Thamarai has strengthened.

- Vishnu



This year I took extra classes to improve my knowledge, and my ability to give classes to the children. For example, I took classes in phonetics, child protection and English. I also join the children in their online classes

in subjects like mapping, chess and guitar, and I learn with them.

I have noticed this year that I am also learning as I teach the children. For example, the English classes I teach don't just help the children, but also help me to improve my communication skills.

- Suba



The greatest learning for me this year was how to coordinate projects through a pandemic. In the last year I have been working on the new building development, the Covid response

I have also learnt the skill of being responsive and flexible in managing difficult situations, while remaining grounded and neutral within myself.

I feel able to treat everyone as equal. I stand for discipline, and Thamarai library has motivated me to read many interesting books. I face challenges with more confidence, I take more responsibility and my time management has improved.

in the village, supporting online classes, shifting our activities from the old site to our new home, building relationships with the neighbourhood and working with the children and youth to establish the sports ground.

I have gained a lot of patience and courage to present to a group (which I have never done before), and to be able to deliver on my goals and responsibilities in a time efficient manner. I have improved my English and am gaining more knowledge in yoga and graphic design.

I feel like I have grown up a lot in this past year in terms of becoming more self-organised and also in helping others to be in action. I have transformed myself from being a nomadic explorer to a knowledge seeker and I am learning to apply all that I have learnt from my experiences over the last years. It is very different from implementing ideas in reality. I face many challenges, but I am motivated to keep taking steps to strive in my work.

- Vignesh



My highlight this year was the inauguration of the new Thamarai building. It was such a special day with so much excitement. As I stood on stage with the children singing Karnatic songs, surrounded by the decorations and activities and snacks that we had all made together, I felt so proud.

When I think about what changes and growth I have experienced personally, I think of my improvements in language and

my digital literacy. Covid has helped me to greatly increase my digital literacy and to be able to work online. Now I am able to work easily from home; something I would not have been able to do last year.

- Savithri





My greatest learning this year has been improving my teamwork skills and working to my full potential.

Thamarai is a place where I can teach and learn at the same time. I have learnt many things

from Thamarai which I am grateful for, but this year I learnt something especially powerful and important: teamwork is about giving my

full potential. During this pandemic time, our team did our best to deliver for the kids. We have always done our best, but this pandemic presented new challenges for all of us, which, together, we managed to overcome.

I have grown in my ability to take responsibility. We have done a lot of activities like chess class, meetings and graphic classes and these have helped me a lot in developing my mental stamina and train myself for any situation.

- Rohit



The Radical Transformation Leadership (RTL) workshops have helped me to work from my heart and to use the leadership tools in my work and personal life. I have learnt that I have to inspire others through action in my work and village, and I have learnt how to persevere with courage. I have also improved my English and planning skills through support from various teachers and classes.

My English speaking skills have developed, and I have grown personally through the RTL tools that I use in my life and work.

- Ananthi



I have learnt a lot about myself over the last year. I have improved my English and my ability to work with children. My responsibilities at Thamarai are increasing, and I

have been working on changing my attitude to be more respectful and courageous in my life.

I have grown in all the classes that I take and the extra responsibilities that I have taken on. I have participated in a lot of learning activities and I have sweet memories of Thamarai Christmas and Pongal celebrations.

- Selvi

This year Thamarai has helped me to develop new good habits, like reading books and using my English dictionary. I have taken on many responsibilities and improved my teaching skills. I also feel like I have become more patient.

Last year I felt negative about myself because I was struggling to learn English, but now I speak English, even if I get it wrong. I know

I have the ability to learn, teach and speak in English. I have also learnt some self-organisation skills. I have grown up in many ways.

- Swathi



This year I learned a little more English and some general knowledge in yoga and graphic design. I have also learned about some important values, giving respect to everyone and treating everyone as equals. The library in Thamarai motivated me to read many interesting books.

I have changed in the way that I can face

difficulties with self-confidence. I have also gained more sense of responsibility and I manage my time better.

- Arthi



Online classes, our remote facilitators

One of the highlights of 2020-2021 has been how friends around the world have offered their skills to Thamarai youth and children through online classes. This has provided a rich cross-cultural learning environment that

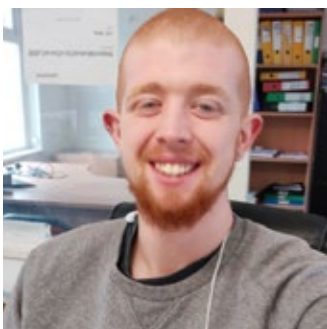
gives our children quality education, skills and provides facilitators with a unique way to connect and serve during these challenging times. Here is what the facilitators have to say



Manikandan - Singapore

I came to learn about Thamarai through the internet, on a search engine.

I have started online classes due to the necessity, because of the Covid situation. What motivates me to keep going is interest and support from Thamarai team and giving back to children education!



Ciaran - Ireland

The children have limitless potential, they are brilliant!
Everybody who comes on board is opting into learning chess and all are well able for the challenge.
The online chess classes and Sunday tournaments have been the highlight of my lock-down experience.



Mitali - Mumbai

Last year, these unprecedented times gave me an opportunity to reconnect with Thamarai and also share a thriving experience with my best friend. Ishita and I thought of sharing our tips and tricks on how to teach grammar to children from our previous experience working with an NGO, and also practice spoken English for their personal growth. While remote learning did come with lot of technical glitches, the dedication of each one to spend their weekends learning encouraged us to keep going. Thank you to the team and Bridget for giving me and my friends an opportunity to be part of Thamarai family



Ishita - Mumbai

It has been a great experience to teach and interact with everyone in Thamarai. I started off taking class for both groups of facilitators, focusing primarily on grammar and speaking/ reading skills, however, through the course of the year Jason took on group 1 and for group 2, Mitali and I focused more on speaking skills and creative writing. It is amazing to see how each one has grown, and it is reflective in their way of story-telling and personal presence.
Thamarai is a great platform, it not only focuses on academic learning but also on other skills which are important in today's time.



Swapnil - Pune

My friend Mitali told me about Thamarai. She had been volunteering for Thamarai for over a year. Over a casual discussion on a Sunday evening, we thought of an idea about how I could contribute. After an initial discussion with the team back at Auroville, we could map out a course of action and start the classes online.
The idea that my online sessions help children think critically about the subject at hand and use creative techniques to present their thoughts motivates me. The energy and curiosity that children bring to the table and the dedicated work by Thamarai volunteers and Bridget motivate me to keep going.



Jason - Navi Mumbai

I heard about Thamarai and Auroville through my acquaintances in the pre-pandemic world, the entire concept of an experimental township had piqued my interest then. So, when the opportunity came along to be a part of such a positive initiative if only through a virtual space, I embraced it in an instant!

Honestly, a discontented individual requires motivation as fuel. As I thoroughly enjoy and savour every moment of what I do here, I find myself not needing any external motivation. This combined with the phenomenal individuals I am associated with here at Thamarai is ultimately what keeps me going.



Aine - Ireland

I heard about Thamarai from my cousin Bridget. I knew she was a part of something really exciting, but never knew the extent of the fantastic work.

I've spent the past year studying online so I'm familiar with virtual classes and knew what could be achieved (even when we're far apart!). The students enthusiasm and interest has been incredibly motivating, especially as the work gets better and better each week. It's been a humbling experience connecting with such talented people across the globe. I can't wait to visit in the future!



Saran D - Bangalore

I got an opportunity to volunteer at thamarai for 3 months, where I could interact with most of the kids and the facilitators teaching them the art of photography and videography. Once the situation changed due to Covid i couldn't interact with thamarai team and the students. To keep in touch with the kids and the entire team and to bring in some digital transformation, I decided to start basics of Graphic design course which would be very useful in the upcoming months.

I always had this thought in mind "Knowledge is the greatest asset". And the best thing i could do is share it with the people who are in need. I was taught every kid has a different interest, we have to introduce them to different activities other than academics which will add value to the outside world. The relationship with the kids keep me doing what i do, and guides them till they become a great teacher and share their asset (knowledge) with their community.

Thamarai After-School



Thamarai hosts two daily after-school facilities for homework support, sports, regular classes in arts and cultural activities and themed core subject classes. Annai Nagar Centre has up to 100 children and Edayanchavadi has 30, and a team of 14 youth facilitators (local and international) and many regular visiting facilitators for special classes.

Annai Nagar has a direct population of 792 people, and surrounding population of 4,000 people, and Edayanchavadi village has a population of 3,500. Both centres are based in the most marginalised sections of the villages. What has been an interesting development is the number of children and youth who are attending the service from surrounding areas. One of our most cherished accomplishments is that many of our Thamarai children, who had been part of our programmes since 2006 - the founding year - have now graduated from college and are back working in the project mentoring the next generation of children.

We enhanced our programme by incorporating Sports, Healthcare, Digital Literacy and English as key components, as well as widening our sense of place with linkages to projects and students in other locations locally and worldwide. The final phase of our new learning centre will contain a fully equipped STEAM room (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) where, as well as capacity related to these fields; children will develop critical thinking and a synthesising mind.

The Annai Nagar After-School

By Jagadeshwari

I am very happy to share with you all about Thamarai After School. We have two after schools right now, one in Annai Nagar and the other one is in Edayanchavadi. I'm going to tell you about Annai Nagar after school where more than 100 children are studying and 10 facilitators coming from the same & surrounding villages.

Normally we support children with their homework with a special focus on the basics in all subjects as children often miss this at school. This year was very challenging because of COVID restrictions. We had to stagger our classes, become socially distant and have different timing for different standards. It is a new experience for everyone as we are normally all together and we had to learn to organize ourselves and the place so that we were all safe.

Highlights of the year at the after school:

- We explored with the children their goals for this year and what outcomes they wanted to achieve. Some wanted to get top marks in school, others wanted to learn new skills such as chess, dance, swimming, guitar, cooking, improving their ability at sports. We contacted friends and soon found resource people for online sessions. It is a nice way for friends from around the world to connect with the children, the project and for children to get a sense of the wider world. We all sit in on the learning sessions. What we learn we share with children and they with us.

- We now have extracurricular activities at the centre such as computers, drumming, dance, sports, Photoshop classes and online weekly classes in maths, guitar, chess, English and mind map sessions.

- It is our dream to be in our new afterschool but at the same time we missed our old place. After the inauguration we started the first day with a candle and a small meditation. The children shared their wishes and we created our ground rules together. Every day the children support us to clean the place and set up for class. The younger children are very interested in cleaning and we have a practice of acknowledging all who help.

- The children love to play in the Treehouse playground. When they are there they love to slide and don't want to do anything else! This is the time to say thanks to the Auroville Tree House Community who built the structure.

Every day we give our best to the children. We try daily to do some new activity and the children are very happy to be part of it. They are also learning how to self organize and help others. I can see the future facilitators now in our children and I happily say that the children are great role models for the next generation.

Thank you so much to the team, children and our supportive friends.

The Edayanchavadi After-School

By Savithri

We slowly started the after-school once COVID first wave was over by getting permission from parents and putting safety protocols in place. The children understood the situation, wore masks while entering the campus and were all very happy to meet their friends and play together after such a long time.

A highlight of this year was when children and facilitators together cleaned and created a small badminton and cricket practice court to play on. Our friend Margaret, from Ireland, surprised us at Christmas by sending money for play materials so we bought equipment for frisbee, skipping, chess, shuttle/cork, cricket, throw rings etc. The children were very happy and they even asked me to extend their playtime each day.

We celebrated a simple Christmas together by playing and singing Christmas songs. This year, each child's family received a very useful Christmas gift from a Thamarai friend of food and spices to help increase family immunity. All families felt very happy and conveyed their gratitude. We also celebrated the Tamil harvest festival called Pongal with traditional games and sugar cane. I was so happy with the progress of the children that I offered them an Indian sweet of their choice. They all asked for Gulab Jamun which I personally cooked and served them.

Summer class started in the midterm school period. We wanted to make the learning session most useful to the children so we got an offer from a friend who could teach a dream catcher making class for few day in that particular week. Our children were

so enthusiastic to learn and each one made their own dream catcher. Each dream catcher was something new and creative. Some children wanted to hang their creation in the after-school and others asked to bring theirs home. Some students are still practising this craftwork.



Open day at the Edayanchavadi after-school

Then COVID started rising up again, so we decided to have class in smaller batches. As the children had no homework because schools were closed, we used the time to teach English intensively through phonetics. We used songs to teach which was a new experience for the children. We also introduced reading practice every day. External facilitators supported us with graphics and chess classes which the children loved. It was a wonderful learning opportunity for us all, the children had continuous questions which the teachers, Saran and Ciaran gladly answered.

Now in this difficult 2nd wave of the pandemic, we closed the centre again and offered online classes, yet many children are without phones.

Facilitators' Training

By Savithri

This year we had many programmes for our facilitators. I'm going to tell you about some of them:

- Awareness Through the Body (ATB) Sessions:

Isora is from Auroville. She taught us how to teach ATB to children. These were nice sessions and they helped us to concentrate. She taught many activities related to mindfulness and concentration. She had a class with the children and they also loved her session. Some of the activities are very new like using colourful parachutes to play with.

- Child Protection :

Himanshu supported us with this year's training where we explored the Thamarai Child Protection Policy and learned about Child Rights and how to handle difficult situations such as child neglect and abuse.

- English and Phonics :

Marion and Tamilselvi from Auroville Teachers Centre support us with language literacy. The Fantastic Phonics curriculum helps us to improve reading skills and Headway curriculum supports us to improve English as a 2nd spoken language.

- Online Class :

We have an English class weekly with Mitali, Ishita and Jason from Mumbai. In that class, we strengthened our conversation, grammar and reading skills. What we learn we share with the children.

- Maths Class :

Thrice weekly we had Maths class with Manikandan from Singapore for several

months, he also took a class for our older children. He not only teaches, but he also guides and inspires us. We learned from him how important it is to have a daily practice and he has given us many books related to science and maths. We, facilitators, are doing regular reading practice with these books.



Marion and Tamilselvi's English class

- STEM class : (by Vignesh)

Lots of new learning platforms have been showering on us since the lockdown. One of my favourites was the Environmental Science sessions with Ravi from Bangalore organised by the STEMLAND team. We connected every Tuesday and Thursday to upgrade on how to teach environmental science through activity-based learning. We made paper crafts, watched birds and played imitation games etc. It was a great time of learning and fun together.

Leadership And Capacity Development



The Amma Appa program

A core element of Thamarai's work is leadership and capacity development and practice using the Radical Transformation Leadership Programs (<https://www.radicallytransform.org>) designed by Dr. Monica Sharma.

Our team, children, youth and adults are supported to discover their leadership skills based on values, competencies and ability to be agents of change at home, in their workplace and in their communities.

We conduct regular training sessions at Thamarai and we are part of a wider network of practitioner coaches who support the program being delivered in English and Tamil to others.

Leadership Programs In 2020-2021

By Bridget

Tata Institute for Social Science professor, SriLatha Juvva and Suriya Prakash, visiting facilitators, supported two Radical Transformational Leadership (RTL) programs this year in Tamil for people from the villages. They also offered training programs for our team to deepen their training as practitioner coaches. The RTL workshops supported participants to identify what they care about and the underlying causes of the issues they face at home, work and community level.

Participants designed projects that will create positive change and as a result project groups have emerged in our Thamarai team to work on important issues such as addiction, the creation of community wellbeing counsellors and the development of life enhancing activities for young people such as sports.



Children leadership class

We have also created weekly practice platforms such as triad practice, book club reading with insights sharing and practitioner coach training sessions to develop the capacity of our team members to be resource people so that the leadership tools can be shared further in the communities that we serve.

Currently as we write this, we are designing a training program to enhance capacity in community volunteers to be well-being counselling volunteers in their community to support people going through trauma and other difficulties of COVID 19.

RTL Workshop Practice From Vasu And Savithri

“In the RTL workshop I learned how to speak powerfully and be courageous. I learned how to work with others to get support, how to stand in my values alone and with others. I took alcohol addiction for my project because in my village most of the youngsters drink in front of the children, so this is dangerous for future generations. The main reason is that at the entrance of my village one Neem tree is there, most of the people are sitting there and drinking in front of others. So that indicates to me I have to change that situation. I want to save the children’s future. That’s why I took on this project”.

-Vasu male student nurse from Annai nagar village.

“Every Thursday we and the Auroville Child Protection team are doing Stewardship practice, it is a very new experience because we are presenting tools to them and they are also presenting. It is a learning platform for both teams. It’s very helpful to practice the tools and implement them in our project.”

-Savithri 24 year old full-time Thamarai team member”

Health and Well-Being



The Mobile Health Education and Healing Project aspires to empower adults and children in well-being by building up body, mind and soul through Indian yoga & traditional healing methods

This project offers:

- yoga and health awareness programmes in schools, villages and Auroville units,
- occasional natural health sessions and dental camps
- alcohol de-addiction and wellness programmes.

Individuals are empowered to increase their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing with a focus on the health of their immune system.

Health Programs In 2020-2021

By Muthukumari

Covid-19 and the related restrictions, has resulted in substantial social and family issues, including (but not limited to) : domestic violence, family tensions, alcohol addiction increased stress levels, lack of income and economic hardship. Alongside these factors, there has also been an increase in poor physical and emotional health, exacerbated by a lack of treatment options during lockdown. Children have had difficulty accessing education and are increasingly addicted to mobile phones and television. Each of the following initiatives provides support and guidance on self care, boosting the immune system and uses the ancient healing wisdom of India and explored:



Weekly Yoga and Healing program in LEC (Life Education Centre)

1. Health and healing care support for women

14 women from different districts participated in these weekly one hour over the phone sessions over a three-month period. Most of the women were experiencing increased health issues such as difficulties with diabetes management, high blood pressure and high stress levels. The program focused on learning

new yoga and healing techniques. 14 women said that the program helped them, their families and their friends. They reported that the program made them feel healthier and happier and that their confidence had increased, and they felt empowered. At the end of the program each woman received a well-being certificate.

Testimonial -Krishnapriya, 58yrs

“For the last two years, I have been suffering badly from psychological issues as well as obesity and leg pain. This was made worse during the Covid-19 lockdown due to being unable to go out for treatment or for walks and exercise. I had the opportunity to attend the wellbeing course by Muthukumari and Adriana which taught me a lot about myself and how to practice yoga and self healing to balance my health issues. I feel much better now, and my sister has also been able to benefit from this course. Thank you for this gift.”

2. Home care services for seniors

Home care support was provided for nine seniors in the community. This was largely focused on healthcare support. Simple yoga therapy including stretching exercises, asanas and pranayama was provided, alongside relaxation techniques and diet advice tailored to their individual needs. The aim was to support individuals to maintain and regain health and happiness. Participants reported feeling care, connection and support. They also became more self-aware, independent and empowered as they practiced the techniques regularly to maintain a healthy life.

3. Health and healing awareness program

Yoga and wellbeing classes were slowly introduced (as lockdown eased) to small groups of villagers working in Auroville units. The classes took place across four different centres focused on education and training, benefiting 58 adults and 31 children.

These classes were held on a regular basis and focused on bringing peace and calm into the lives of participants amid the chaos and uncertainty of Covid-19.

Weekly Yoga, menstrual care and well-being programs were carried out in Life Education Centre, Thamarai, Sustainable Livelihood Institute and in Illaigarkal school.



Weekly yoga for the menstrual cycle in Thamarai

Testimonial - Iyyanar, 45yrs

"I have been attending the healing program for the past four months in Auroville Illaigarkal centre, along with 10 others. I used to organise similar programs, but I never attended until now. I really connect to these well-being sessions; whatever I am taught I experience in my body. I feel more active and energetic. I, and others in the school, realise the importance of health awareness. I feel happier and healthier as a result. We appreciate this program and hope it continues".

4. Alcohol addiction program

Counselling, Alcohol Anonymous meetings and rehabilitation programs were offered to villagers experiencing alcohol addiction. During the Covid-19 pandemic we had some success; some people who attended the program are now addiction free and some relapsed. We have decided to make alcohol addiction our main health priority for 2021- 2022. In addition to our rehabilitation program, we will be introducing a year-long well-being campaign that will create an enabling environment for health and life enhancing activities.

Testimonial - Vijai, 21yrs

"I have been suffering from addiction for the last three years. I have been unhappy with tension, irritation and daily problems at home. I felt so depressed that I cut my hand with a knife. I had a poor appetite and difficulty sleeping. At some point I felt that I had to change myself so I joined the 30-day rehabilitation program in Kottakuppam with the help of Thamarai. Now I feel happy with my family. I'm also following self improvement practices like sports, eating proper foods and attending AA meetings. I am looking forward to even more changes in my life. Thank you."

The Learning Centre, Sports Ground Development And Future Projects

After four years of service in Annai Nagar village it is a delight for our team to know that before the end of 2021 we will have created a permanent learning centre with quality after school, technology, literacy, arts and sports curriculum. At the time of writing this, we have opened stage 1 (Ground floor classroom, disability toilet, sports ground and small children's play area) and have secured the funding for Stage 2 (kitchen, dry toilet block, 2 more classrooms). The entire project to build a learning centre in Annai Nagar village will be complete by December 2021 including a STEM technology room under the guidance of Raman & Divij architects and Kishor Construction.

design. It was amazing how individual children's projects overlapped with one another and were interdependent. This was a magical moment to see how the building project could be a conscious full-spectrum approach by integrating the children's values and ideas. Since then, the project has taken so many upgrades becoming a dream come true for all of us. The project has been sponsored by Ramco, Electric Aid Ireland, Stichting de Zaiier, Kedge College and so many friends from around the world. Many innovative technologies from Auroville and associates have been integrated.

Building Development

By Vignesh (Thamarai building project manager)

The construction has been a very interesting process; the initial plan was to go with a simple community hall type classroom but we realised that would not be at full potential for the children and the village.

So we started looking at the development through the lens of the Conscious Full Spectrum Response Model where we asked the students and the community what problems they experienced in their lives and community, what norms create and sustain these problems and what values-based solutions can be created for a thriving community and planet. The children created great projects and we aligned them to see how this could shape the learning centre's



Building site : work in progress

It has been almost a year and a half now since we began the construction, there have been struggles such as COVID 19 restrictions and total lock down. Post lockdown we went full swing to finish phase 1 and had 6 weeks happily using the facility before the second

lockdown came. We hope to resume by mid June and will have the project complete by December 2021.

Some of the interesting architectural facts are:

The children's commitment to saving water has driven the decision on installing primarily dry toilets, grey water reuse and a rainwater catchment tank. Their commitment towards a clean environment has inspired us to use waste in our building process such as our toilet block doors which are made from 100% recycled plastic. Their commitment towards reducing the high levels of anaemia, currently at 77% in our children, has guided the choice of building a good kitchen, wood fired oven and creating edible features in the garden. Their commitment towards peace and harmony has put as a priority the development of play and sports areas.

The site is a long, narrow stretch so to overcome the spatial constraints we decided to work on a vertically elevated structure which would allow us to have more open space outdoors. The ground floor has been designed in such a way that could accommodate three groups of children at a time with closed and semi open spaces. The indoor classroom can also be used to hold small gatherings such as movie sessions as well. The outdoor area consists of an open classroom which can be converted into a larger event space as and when it is required.

An interesting feature is the play area made by the Tree House Community based in Auroville. The tree house is completely made from trees grown in Auroville. The foundation is placed in recycled rubber tyres filled with cement to

avoid termites. The structure is made of wood, rope, wall climbing tiles and has tiny stilt spaces where the children can climb through in different ways and slide down through a single plank of "work tree" and land in the sand pit or use the swings to feel like they are flying.



Accessible toilets and tree-house

The toilet was designed in such a way that the children who are differently abled could access the toilet with ramps, larger sized toilets and support equipment. The structure is designed as a fusion between the contemporary and vernacular collaboration of brick walls with mud plaster and Mangalore tiled roofing. The most interesting factor is the door for the toilet which is completely made by Minvayu team of recycled bottle caps and plastic bags collected from Quiet Beach near Auroville.

Inauguration Ceremony At Annai Nagar After School

By Bridget

March 7th 2021 was a wonderful day for all of us. We felt accomplished and joyful with this long time dream now a reality.



Ceremony for the younger children

We celebrated with friends from the village, Auroville and the various teams that co-created to make it happen. The children were actively involved in the organisation and proceedings.

The program kicked off with an inauguration ceremony with the smaller children. They had a great time in the new treehouse play area and enjoyed sweets made by Kyoung Hyoun Lee and friends from Auroville.



Fun in the tree-house

The evening started with a lamp ceremony and the traditional welcome song “vanakkam” by the older students. Bala offered Carnatic songs and friends from Auroville offered



Children welcoming guests

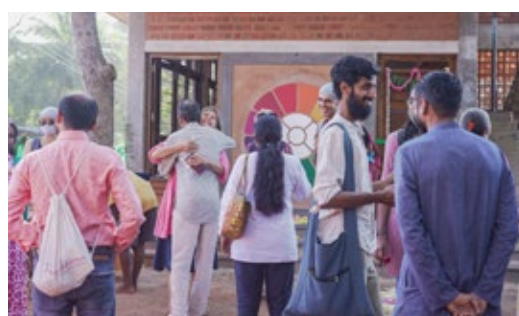
chants, in the indoor classroom, to bless the learning space.

Refreshments, made with the help of the children, were served in traditional clay pots made by our neighbour. It was a joyful occasion to have people gather to welcome this next phase in our lives. We are grateful to



Traditional ceremony of inauguration

so many people who have helped us achieve this.



Welcoming our guests

Sports Ground

By Vignesh



It has been a great adventure for the Thamarai team to work with the local sports groups to create this sports ground that was sparked by an idea from a child who wanted to bring unity through sports.

It is now a well-serviced ground fully fenced with facility for footsall, volleyball, badminton, cricket practice and other sports. There were challenges on the way such as differing opinions on priorities but all agreed that sports fosters well-being, that it will be a catalyst for gender equality and will build confidence and support youth to have life-enhancing activity.

After levelling and raising the ground, youth pitched in to create a large fence with netting

to catch the balls. The gates and posts were welded locally and youth helped to mark the pitch and purchase equipment.

Eventually, Covid - 19 slowed us down but by March 7th, 2021 we were complete and the ground inaugurated. It was very lovely to see so many youths coming together on this joint project.

We are grateful for the support of Stichting De Zaaier, the Auroville Foundation, the Project coordination group, Kedge college students, Auroville Sports Resource Centre and Rajeev for their support in this initiative.

Thank You

Our work is enabled by the supportive structure that is behind us. We are grateful to our mentors, volunteers and patrons. In particular, the people of the local communities, our network in Auroville, India and internationally who help us refine and enrich our service. Special thanks for the financial support in 2020-2021 of Stichting de Zaiier, Foundation for World Education, Electric Aid Ireland, Kedge Business School, and fundraising drives in France, Ireland, Auroville, Australia and Canada.

We were also extremely grateful for those who worked on designing and building our new learning centre and sports, in particular, Raman architects and Kishore construction teams, Dr Lucas, Gavury and Ecopro, ELEA and Minvayu team, The Tree House Community, Auroville Land Board and the local community groups.

The Thamarai Team



Financial Report

In the financial year 2020-2021, we had income and expenditure for the operations of:

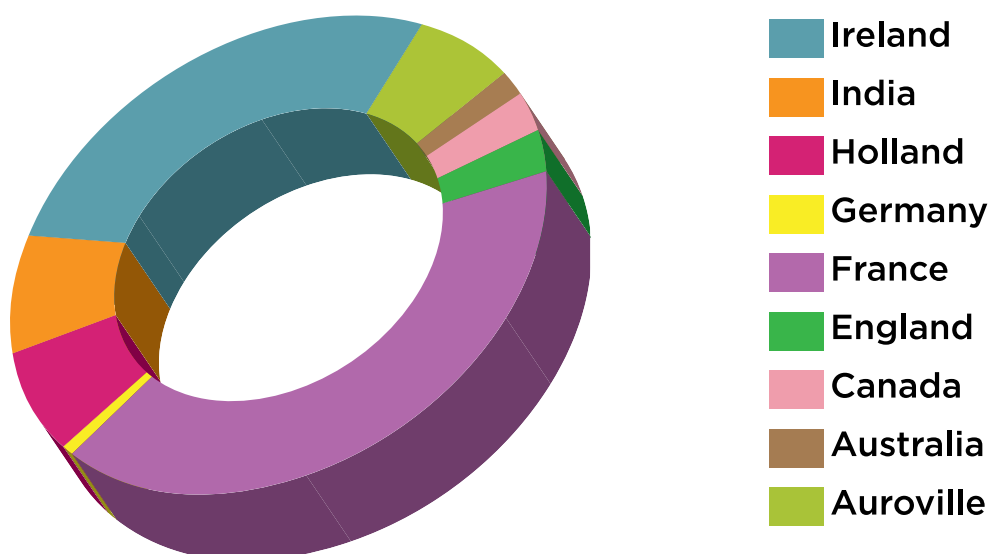
1. Our Educational Programs
2. Building stage 1 of our new learning centre and sports ground
3. Our Covid response in association with Auroville Village Action Group.

We received 34.5 lakh contributions and spent 43.8 lakh. The overspend was because of the building development and was covered by reserves we had for this purpose. We also raised 4.8 lakh specifically for Covid Relief food packages.

Donations Received

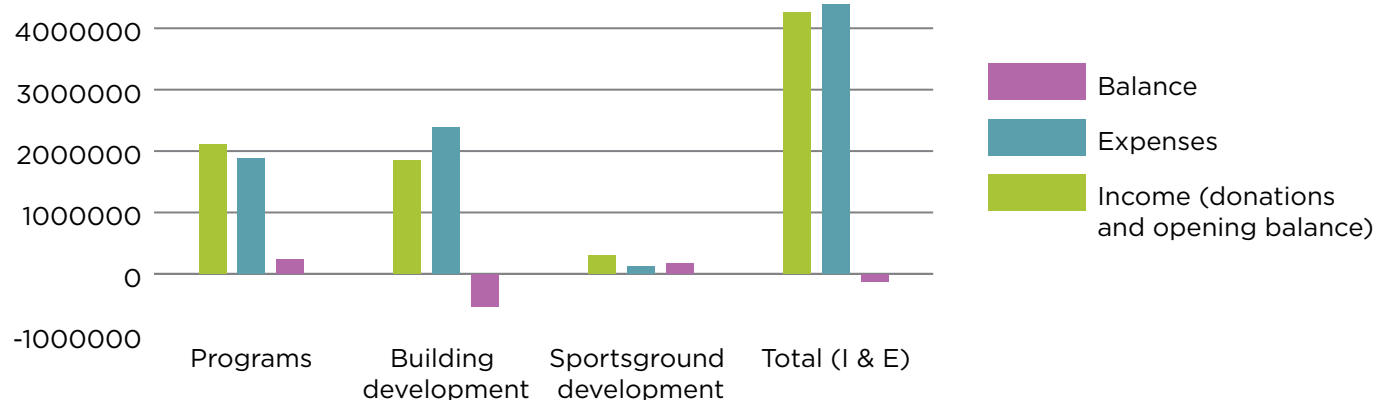
Donations of Thamarai Educational Projects 2020-2021	Rupees	Euros	Dollars
Contributions for programs and operations	191,4615	21,612	25,799
Contributions for development-building and sports ground	163,4403	18,449	22,023
Total contributions received	354,9018	40,062	47,822
Conversation rates of 27.6.21 1 INR = 0.011290 EUR & 1 INR = 0.013470 USD			

Where Donations Come From



Donations sources by place/ country	INR	Euro	Dollars	%
Auroville	202,987.00	2,291.73	2,734.25	7%
Australia	63,139.00	712.84	850.48	2%
Canada	110,710.00	1,249.92	1,491.26	3%
England	122,053.00	1,377.98	1,644.05	3%
France	1,431,102.00	16,157.14	19,276.94	40%
Germany	47,118.00	531.96	634.68	1%
Holland	296,760.00	3,350.42	3,997.36	8%
India	292,932.10	3,307.20	3,945.80	8%
Ireland	982,215.51	11,089.21	13,230.44	28%
Total	3,549,017.51	40,062.00	47,822.00	100%

Income and Expenditure

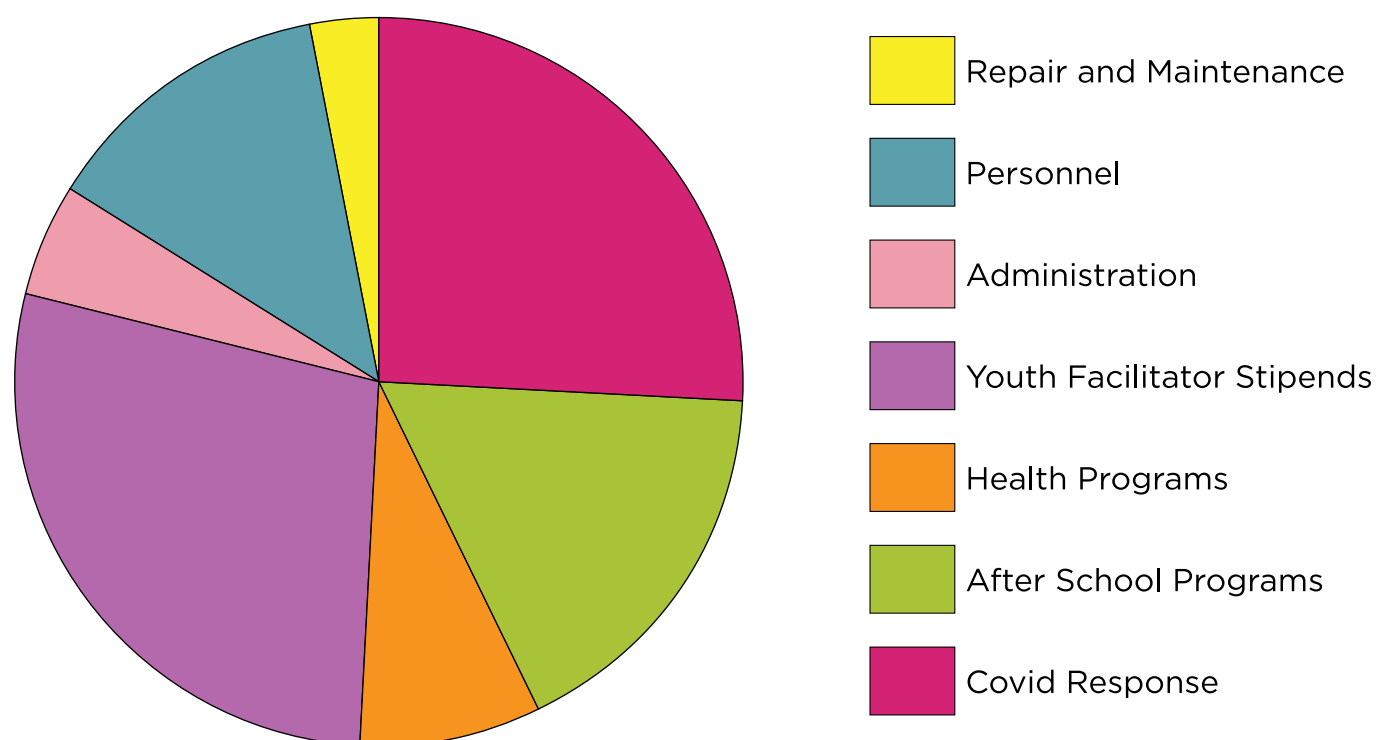


April 1st 2020-March 31st 2021	Income (donations + opening balance)	Expenses	Balance
Programs	2,104,935	1,876,697	228,238
Building development	1,853,012	2,384,069	-531,057
Sportsground development	296,760	120,333	176,427
Total (I & E)	4,254,707	4,381,099	-126,392

What We Spent On

The following are the expenditure areas from 1st April 2020 to March 31st 2021.

Expenditure distribution	Rupee	Euro	Dollar	% of total expense
Building and Sports Development	250,4402	28,275	33,734	Excluding development
After School Programs	316,170	3,570	4,259	17%
Covid Response	481,911	5,441	6,491	26%
Health Education Program	153,601	1,734	2,069	8%
Personnel	236,350	2,668	3,184	13%
Youth Facilitator Stipends	537,450	6,068	7,239	28%
Administration	93,545	1,056	1,260	5%
Repair and Maintenance	44,546	651	777	3%



% of total excluding development

Financial Conclusions

- a. This has been a meaningful year where we were able to support families with nutrition and education through the challenges of the pandemic. We have also completed stage 1 of the learning centre and sports ground development. We have secured funding for stage 2 and will have this completed by November 2021.
- b. Once off contributions made up 66% of total donations. We will work towards building small regular donations to ensure the long term sustainability of the project. We will continue to fundraise for the coming year encouraging regular donations. For further information: www.thamarai.org.in
- c. A major boost this year has been the many volunteers, from both within India and internationally, who are giving their skills and time to offer online programs. We have been very grateful for these in kind donations which has enriched our service.





Thamarai Educational Projects

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