



Thamarai Projects Annual Report 2017-2018



Thamarai is a registered unit under AVAT Trust of Auroville Foundation

Thamarai Projects Annual Report 2017-2018



INDEX

- Acknowledgements..... 7
- Directors’ Note 8
- Our Values and Context 9
- THAMARAI AFTER-SCHOOL 10
 - After-school 11
 - Summer Camp 2018 14
- LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT 16
 - Stewardship for New Emergence 17
- THE PLAYGROUP 18
 - Playgroup 19
- HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES..... 20
 - Health-care Programs 21
 - Alcohol Awareness and De-addiction 23
 - Alcohol-awareness Program 23
 - Success Stories 24
- Plan of Action 26
- Financial Report 27
- Appendix 28

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the support of:

1. The local communities we serve:

This year has been a privilege to work in Edayanchavadi and in Annai Nagar co-creating with local youth facilitators and a support team of teachers, elders, women and children serving a wider dream of supporting the development of full potential for all.

2. Our Team:

Currently our team is made up of:

- Young men and women graduates and undergraduates from Annai Nagar village, who have now successfully completed one year facilitators training in action program.
- Youth from neighbouring villages, some of whom once were also children of Thamarai when we started the project in 2006. They have over 5 years of experience being facilitators in other Thamarai programs.
- Our playgroup teachers.
- International interns on a one-year internship from France and Germany, facilitators who come weekly for extra curricular activities in cultural and arts.
- Mentors and friends from Auroville and beyond.

3. Friends, partners and co-creators:

Those who have given their time, provided fruitful partnerships, shared valuable advice and mentorship and donated in kind or financially.

We acknowledge you all for your care and support. We are grateful to each and everyone of you and to the grace that guides and supports us all to be part of this emerging dream of a world that offers the resources and opportunity for the blossoming of full potential of all.

Yours in Service,

The Thamarai Team

Directors' Note



It is a joy to reflect on 2017-2018, which was another cycle for Thamarai as we added a new learning centre to our service in Annai Nagar village, a village on the north side of Auroville. We have trained youth facilitators from this and nearby villages and the service has been in operation at a temporary location for the past 12 months. We recently received a good news that we have been given stewardship of a piece of Auroville land in the centre of the village to build a permanent Thamarai learning centre and sports complex. We dream to create a state-of-the-art learning facility where we can expand our education programming, provide opportunity for further education and skills development and support the development of similar facilities in other villages.

This year we have also been blessed with support for the project from both Auroville and the local community, from well-wishers that have provided free classroom, internet and office space, from contributions in kind and financially and a wealth of friends who have stepped forward to offer programs or mentorship to our team. This generosity has helped us to strengthen the service.

Following is the activity report on all aspects of Thamarai's work for the year 2017-2018.

Thank you for being part of the Thamarai journey, each one of us is a unique thread and together we can create value-based solutions to problems and build more sustainable, equitable and just society for all.

Bridget Horkan & Muthukumari Mayavan

Our Values and Context

Thamarai (the Tamil word for lotus flower) is a project that stands on the values of full potential and growth of well-being for all. Like the lotus flower, we believe each one should have the opportunity to bloom to their fullest. We have engaged with the villages near the International township of Auroville since 2006, focussing on a series of informal education projects such as:

- a daily playgroup for 32 children,
- an after-school service for 60 children focusing on homework, English, digital literacy, arts, cultural and environmental programs,
- a weekly natural health-care education program for 130 women in 7 locations,
- alcohol awareness and de-addiction programs and
- community leadership and capacity development programs.

In context to our 11 years of service, Thamarai's work has been a counter support to:

- a strong reliance on rote education in schools rather than a more integral approach,
- a growing drain from local government to private schools,
- a considerable population of adults with inadequate literacy skills to support their children's afterschool educational needs and
- a high prevalence of alcohol-related issues in home environments.

Thamarai envisions to create an enabling environment for the children and young adults to be creative, expressive, responsible and productive along with improving their learning curve and agency.



Thamarai team



THAMARAI AFTER-SCHOOL

Thamarai Learning Centre hosts a daily after-school facility for homework support, sports, regular classes in arts, cultural activities and themed core subject classes. The centre has 60 regular children and a team of 11 youth facilitators daily (local and international) and many regular visiting facilitators for special classes. Annai Nagar is a marginalised community, being dalit, with a population of 1,500 people and 135 families. What has been an interesting development is the number of children/youth who are attending the service from surrounding villages. We have enhanced our program this year by incorporating digital literacy and English as key components, as well as widening our sense of place with linkages to projects and student in other locations locally and worldwide. We also have completed thrice weekly digital literacy program for 5th to 8th standard in Edayanchavadi Government school and health programs for children.

After-school

By Savithri and Bridget

Academic year 2017-2018 was a year where we focussed on developing a strong foundation by conducting continuous trainings for the team while getting to know the children and their individual needs. Thamarai team aspires to work on the overall holistic development of children with various components of arts, crafts, science, technology, culture and leadership interwoven, while also being a facility to support the children with their homework and coursework. These are the children who do not get enough support in life or have adequate access to resources. The facilitators are local youth at their graduate level, many of whom were once children in Thamarai, and with resource persons, they co-create the sessions along with the children. This program is further enhanced on weekends when children enjoy experiential learning at the Thamarai Saturday club and take part in educational field trips on Sundays while facilitators have their training classes. Thamarai operates a drop-in, after-school program from 5.30pm to 8.00pm each evening, open to all children. Weekly classes are also held of Silambam Martial arts and Odissi and traditional stick dance. We go through continuous training, it is important to us that we create a shared cross-cultural learning

environment where we are continually growing and each one is a student as well as a teacher.

Highlights of last year included a strong focus on the development of English and digital literacy, continuous training of our youth facilitators, ecological excursion programs, intercultural programs, special themed classes, well-being campaigns, leadership training, summer camp and cycle trips to other villages.

The recent summer camp was a hit with the children, it focussed on English and digital literacy, sports, arts, and specific themed areas such as values and qualities for our lives, leadership, mapping and water. The program was designed after subject suggestions from the students and they had key areas of responsibility and lead some sessions. In closing circle, the children expressed what they learned and their highlights and made a special request to not close Thamarai for the remainder of the holidays! So the centre remained open during May with digital literacy and sports programs.



Open day / Sports session / Snack time

We enjoyed special programs that included:

- Stick dance with Anand and Madhu (1) and Silambam with Prakash (2)
- 3 Youth were sponsored on special youth programs - one to the Himalaya's (3), one through the Narmada River plateau and one to a gender-based equality program through Frisbee in Hyderabad
- Vedic mathematics with Vaideigi for facilitators (4)
- Pongal (5), Deepam and Christmas celebrations
- Odissi dance with Kalvi (6)
- Numerous field trips including Devathanapettai - Dry tropical evergreen forest, Sankalpa arts exploration, Auroville excursion day, Botanical gardens (7), Intervillage cycle trip (8)
- Stewardship for New Emergence Leadership program for facilitators with Dr. Monica Sharma (9)
- French students exchange - the Incredible India Team (10)
- Waste management clown performance with Srini from Yatra and friends (11)
- Digital literacy program with Kalai (12)
- Herbal class with Muthukumari (13)
- Weekly art with Bel (14)
- Korean dance group performance with the Korean travelling school (15)
- Leadership program for children and ongoing project development with Devaselvy (16)
- Magic show with Juergen
- Dental Health Program with full treatment from Auroville Dental team
- Child protection program with Suriya Gandhi
- PIMS hospital heart and lung check-up program
- First aid with Nagamuthu
- Interculture skype session with students in Old Banks School Australia



Summer Camp 2018

By Johann

Summer camp was a highlight of the year where we enjoyed 7 days of a multi-faceted schedule that was designed based on suggestions from the children on what they wanted to learn. English, Computers, Sports and Art were their top favourite requests. A total of 50 children attended and took an active part in planning, preparation and delivery of the sessions. The program was supported by our local facilitators and many visiting facilitators. At the end of the program the children requested that Thamarai stay open for the remainder of the holidays so evening programs of sports and computers were offered for the remainder of the month of May.

Daily 9am to 12:30pm and 5:30pm to 7:30pm. Every day began with 5 mins of cleaning and preparations followed by the circle time. We had a theme on environment and habitat, where children learned many songs to improve their English. Activities like blindfold games were conducted to bring attention and body awareness, practices of compassion and gratitude, games and sports were explored. Prakash, one of the Tamil facilitators, held a presentation about a youth program he was part of, narrating his journey through the Narmadha river basin meeting the



English class

local communities and learning from their ecological struggle. Laura and Chloe, our french volunteers, led an activity on waste management and Devaki and Said on water management. We also had very interesting art classes on the themes of recycling plastic bottles and animal mask-making led by Deoyani and Bel, respectively. We took a special excursion to Auroville to experience a program in Botanical gardens and Matrimandir, children were in awe by the silence and beauty of Matrimandir and were excited to learn about the surroundings of Botanical Garden and climb the giant Bamboo watch tower to look at the birds and animals. During the evening sessions, Muthukumari led a program on practicing qualities and values in life, this session included a magic carpet visualisation journey, we also had art class with Bel, sports with Kavi, computer class with Jagdeswari and Devaselvy guided us through Stewardship leadership program, where children identified and planned projects they want to start for the improvement of their village and Thamarai.

The program was a real cross-cultural learning engagement with a diverse team of facilitators from the surrounding villages, from Auroville and our international interns, and the energy and commitment of the children made it a very rich learning environment for all.

1. A group photo after a session on waste and water management
2. Recycle plastic session with Deoyani
3. Plastic bottle art models by children from Recycle Plastic session by Deoyani
4. Cleaning and preparation session
5. Use of pictorial charts in English Class
6. Laura, French volunteer, explaining the benefits of waste management





LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A core element of Thamarai's work, both for facilitator training and children/adult education is a space for leadership/stewardship development and practice. Children, youth and adults are fostered to discover their values based on leadership skills and competencies and to see themselves as agents of change in their lives and communities. This year, 15 facilitators and 40 children attended the Stewardship for New Emergence program. All are now in weekly practice groups and have individual projects that they are working on in areas that they care about and want to manifest a change in.

Stewardship for New Emergence

By Muthukumari and Bridget

The stewardship curriculum has been imparted to us by Dr. Monica Sharma, the former Director of leadership and capacity development with the United Nations. Many of the current Thamarai team have been trained directly by her, and in 2017-2018 our next batch of youth facilitators and all our children have taken the training with local practitioner coaches. The training has supported them to grow in confidence and see that they can play a part in creating value-based solutions to local problems by sourcing their inner power, understand the systems and conditions that create or sustain problems and design their own solutions to everyday problems. Currently, the children and youth facilitators are in weekly practice groups sharing examples of how they have used the tools and are working on group projects. This leadership program has been a great support for personal growth, it makes a beautiful cross-generational learning environment where each of us has a part in dreaming and designing the value-based changes we want to see in Thamarai and in the surrounding society and develop a supportive structure for us to take positive steps towards that change.

We have been lucky to receive sponsorship

to create a program that brings together the changes the children want to see in their society, that is reflected in their project work, with a film making course imparted by Yatra Media Arts Foundation entitled "A new world through the eyes of Children". The program will bring their leadership skills, projects and A-Z of film-making skills together, culminating with Thamarai children producing their own film with children from two other mixed caste. We look forward to seeing the outcome.

Children's and youth's projects from Stewardship for New Emergence:

- Water project - build awareness about water and improve quality and supply in our village
- Waste management project - reduce the use of plastic and find a solution for waste
- Peace project - develop atmosphere of peace and stop fighting
- Develop respect and a quiet atmosphere in Thamarai and the village
- Unity project - bring people together
- Games project - look after the games properly and develop games for both girls and boys
- Library project - manage the library in Thamarai better and create one in the village
- Stationary project - manage the stationery cupboard in Thamarai so nothing goes missing and we have enough
- Improve English and computer ability
- Improve core subjects- Tamil, Maths, English, Science



Stewardship session with Annai Nagar children



THAMARAI PLAYGROUP

Thamarai playgroup has 32 children, between the ages of 2-3 years, for whom we offer a 5 day, 9am-3pm, activity-based learning programs. All these children are assured a place for further education in Udavi - an Auroville outreach school. In this academic year, 17 boys and 15 girls joined the playgroup. We have 4 teachers and an international volunteer. We have a program of activity and play-based learning and also have special emphasis on fine and gross motor skills development.



Playgroup children on their trip to Matrimandir

Report on Playgroup

By Malliga and Johann

Every morning at 9 o'clock children are received with smiles and share how they are feeling. Half the group start the morning in the playground with the sand, swing, climbing frame or play ball/frisbee and the others explore indoor activities such as recognising objects in English and Tamil, beading, puzzles, play dough, drawing, painting and free play sessions based on the Montessori teaching method. After an hour, the children help clean up followed by a short recess. Each month, themes such as numbers, colors, fruits, animals and alphabet are explored. Both groups come together during circle time to sing songs and rhymes and have conversations about everyday life or special festivals, etc. Then children are given lunch followed by a sleep break. When children wake up they have storytime, sing songs and play games. A key feature of each day is to practice a healing meditation to balance and enhance energy. This helps children to concentrate and accelerates their learning.

In the months of January to April, after the monsoon, we had field trips to explore temples in the closer bioregion, the botanical garden, the Matrimandir and Sri Ma beach which was a lot of fun. Children learnt much from these

different environments and got a sense of the wider world.

Celebrations are a welcome feature throughout our year together. Special emphasis is placed on Pongal (harvest festival), Saraswathi Pooja (honouring the Goddess of learning), Deepam (festival of light) and Christmas.

This year we introduced special playground activities. On Mondays, children draw kolam with different colour powders. On Tuesdays, they learn how to wash clothes and cleanup their own space. On Wednesdays, children draw with chalk on the cement floor and draw in the sand to develop their fine motor skills. On Thursdays, ball games enable children to learn catching, throwing, sharing, leadership and care for each other. On Fridays, after prayer, a short walk in the nature where children observe and sense their surroundings and learn the names of what they see such as trees, plants, vehicles, birds, etc. Children were also taught different activities to develop their gross motor skills and social skills such as simple basic exercises, animal movement and sound, dance with music and building games.

We have a weekly sharing meeting where teachers express what is needed to make the playgroup the best environment possible for all.

We have had a lot of positive feedback from the parents about how the children express and share at home their learning and how they enjoyed in the playgroup.

In July, this batch moved on to school and now we have new group of 32 bright children. We would like to thank everyone who supported us including Saiier, parents, children and all other friends and volunteers.



First session of the playgroup activity



HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

“Physical culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body.”

Sri Aurobindo

Muthukumari leads the Mobile Health Education program of 30 weekly sessions with a foundation in yoga in 7 locations attracting 200 women from 20 villages. The sessions include health indicators with pre-and post-program testing to measure the effects on participants. The program is thriving and has just graduated its first women trainers who will now become instructors for the continuation of their groups and the establishment of new groups, thus creating a sustainable model for ongoing yoga, health and well-being at village level. Well-being is augmented with an alcohol awareness program and de-addiction service as many homes struggle with the effects of alcoholism.

Healthcare Programs

By Muthukumari and Said

It is noticeable that many people are experiencing a rapid change in lifestyle and life quality, mainly due to changes in food habits, cultural outlook, economic stress, addiction and degeneration of the environment with pollution in water, air and food.

Participants of this program tell us these factors cause unhappiness and health issues such as stress, diabetes, obesity, high-blood pressure, high levels of anemia, alcoholism and domestic violence.

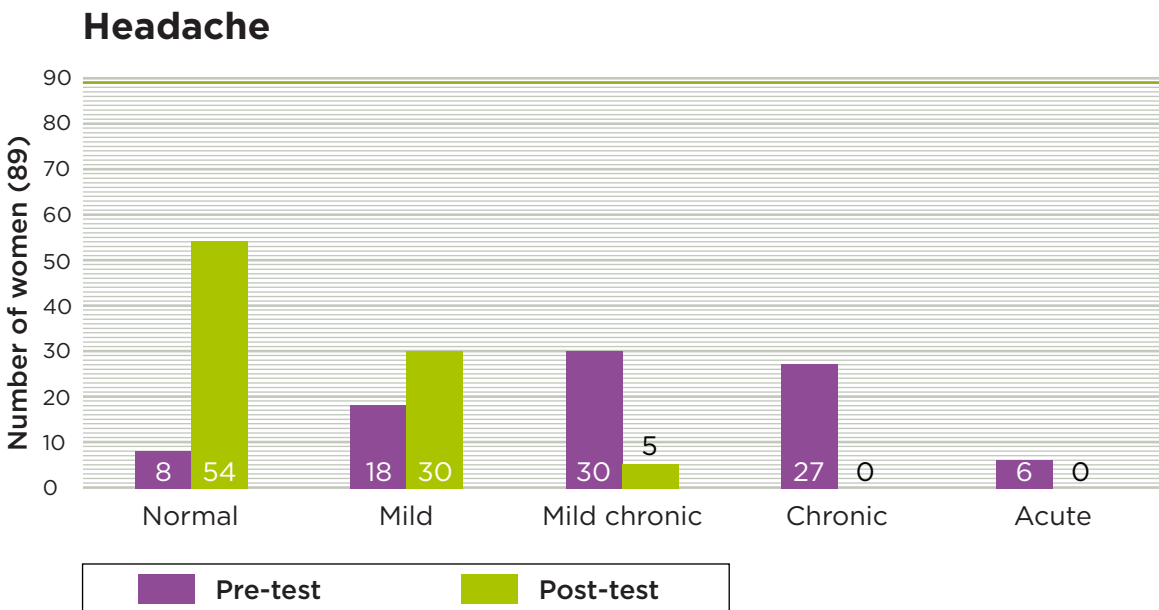
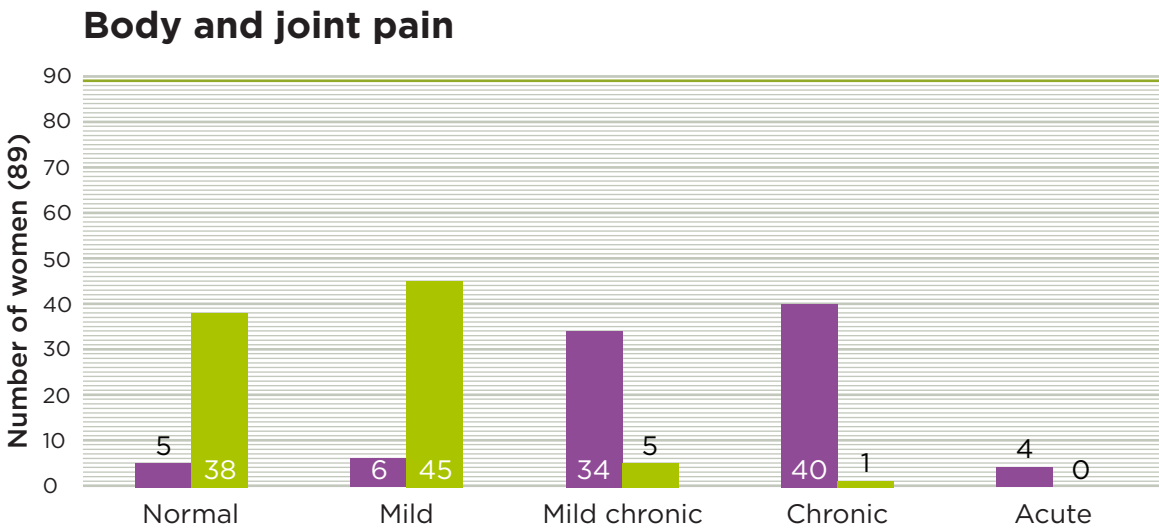
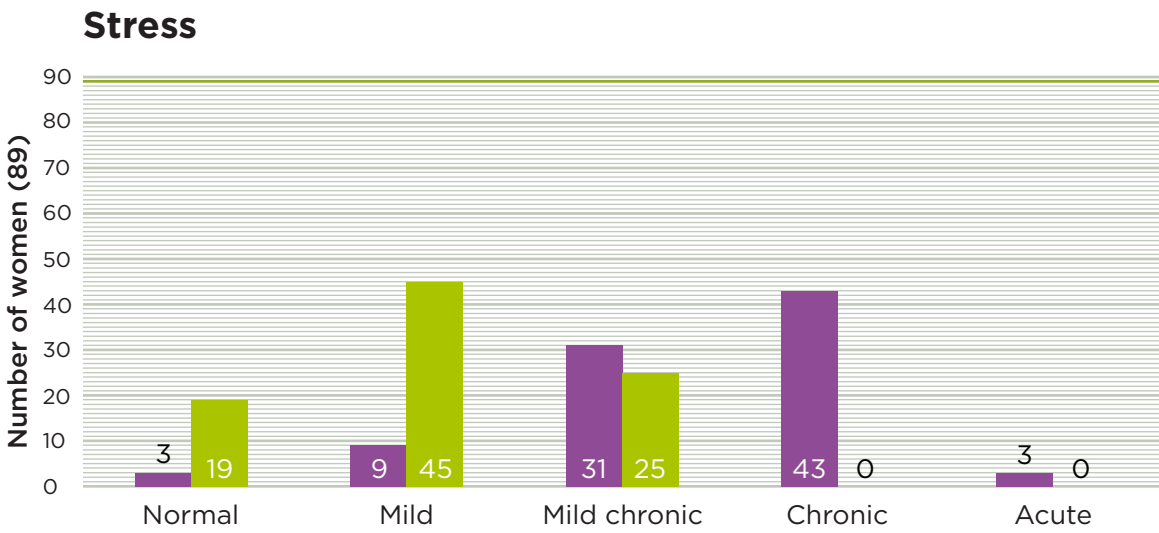
The Mobile Health and Healing Education Program, started from an earlier health project, Edayanchavadi Healing Centre, is designed to counteract ill health with well-being by developing a consciousness for body and mind that empowers participants by understanding their own health and which links them with the natural healing heritage of India. The program links primary healthcare with traditional and natural health practices and yoga.

The participants who have been most enthusiastic and dedicated have been encouraged to train further to become facilitators to lead their current group in practice and to set up new groups in their own

village. We are currently preparing a manual to support them with this step. The women tell us that the program has supported them to feel confident in handling many of their own and family health issues. Most of the women have not had formal education but through this program they understand how their body system works, how disease and imbalance is caused and how to heal and maintain a healthy balance in simple natural ways. We have also noticed that the 2 year old children who come and practice with their mothers repeat the word yoga and happily do asanas. The ultimate goal is to support women to build up knowledge and confidence to transform their own, family and society health and to change the issues that have arisen in the pre and post tests. The tests show many positive results at both physical and psychological levels. Women have reported feeling less tensed, experienced less back and joint pains, less headaches (see page 22), and many have also reported normal menstruations, sugar level, improvement in respiration and digestion and blood pressure (see appendix for statistics). The women have expressed gratitude for the Mobile Health Education Program in their lives, they say that it provides a positive break from the habitual work habits.



Yoga class in Oli school / Herbal class in Well Paper / Participant practicing yoga asana



Alcohol Awareness and De-addiction

In 2016, the youth of Thamarai created a well-being campaign to counter alcohol in Edayanchavadi village that birthed a focussed effort to tackle alcoholism. Today we have a counselling and de-addiction support service available for anyone in need. This is augmented by occasional campaigns to raise awareness.

Alcohol-awareness Program

By Muthukumari and Bridget

This year the youth of Annai Nagar created a drama during festival time that highlighted the impact of alcoholism on family life using real-life situations in their village. Women’s groups of neighbouring Allankuppan mobilised to create a petition to close the alcohol shops.

Currently we offer sponsorship for a 30-day de-addiction program in centres located in Pondicherry and Chennai, linkages to AA and counselling service. We also have supported the establishment of two local AA meetings and sponsored food and facilities for a regional AA convention. The service builds awareness of alcoholism and related issues and offers support and de-addiction services, as well as builds positive alternatives for young people such as sports and skills development. This service is managed by Muthukumari who received the Ilaigarkal Education Centre Youth award in March 2018 for her work of empowering well-being through natural health care in local communities.



A session by Dr. Palani

Success Stories



«I have been part of health programme past 10 months and it has helped me lot. There has been a huge change in my lifestyle, like my food habits. I have realised what we do with our body and life is in our hands, good or bad, it depends on how we create. The health sessions made me aware of my obesity problems linked to diabetes, blood pressure, irregular menstrual, tension and stress. Now, after changing my lifestyle, I feel my body is weightless, lost 5 kgs, my menstrual cycle is regular, diabetes and blood pressure is normal, no stress, even my children and husband noticed I am more in harmony with my family. I feel more active and energetic and stress-free mind lets me be more creative at work. Before this change, I never felt like going out because of my shyness, fear and obesity, but now after signing up for the health programme, the change has let me more self-confident and helped me develop courage to speak in front of others.»

Jayaluxmi, 32, Morattandi village



«The health and yoga classes have helped me learn a lot. Now, I feel more healthy and fit. Few years back, I had uterus operation, abdomen problem and for almost 4 years I couldn't bend as there was constant pain and had to be so careful and be on regular medication. I was unsure and scared to do Yoga initially but I began with breathing exercises and later moved on to others, and now after continuously practicing the routine, I see a huge change. I can easily bend, experience no pain and also my menstrual cycle has been regularized. The program also let me perform Yoga exercises on stage during the Village Action Festival. This was my first time on stage, which even surprised my mother-in-law, but I feel much more confident now after taking up Yoga as a practice.»

Chandra Leka, 28, Vanur Village, works in Village Action



«Since six months I am doing Yoga. In the Yoga class, I learned many new things about my body, diet and health. It has helped me be aware of my body and also taught how we can get rid of pains and body problems. By doing Yoga, I lost 2 kgs, and feel more energised and more concentrated. Yoga keeps me very fresh and peaceful in mind. Yoga taught me the benefits of natural medicine. Also it taught me that we don't need doctors. Now I am more mindful and aware of my family's health as well. I have promised myself to keep practicing Yoga regularly and be happy and healthy in my life. Many thanks to Muthukumari for teaching and sharing Yoga and other health information.»

Sangeetha, 34, Kuilapalayam village, works in Oli school



«For me, Yoga has been a new journey. Until now the concept of yoga for me only meant an exercise to lose weight, but through health program I realized yoga is beyond everything. It's more for physical and psychological well-being as well as spiritual growth.

Before the program, I had psychological problems, like tensions, anger and being extremely sensitive. Through Yoga, I understood how to balance physical and psychological problems and also I experienced the other positive qualities, like patience, peace and happiness. The program helped my mind relax and balanced my weight. Previously, I also have diabetes, now I have learned how to shift my habits to keep it stable and normal. I share my acquired knowledge to family. I feel more happy now at home with my family after all the changes I have experienced.»

Chitra, 34, Periyamudaliachavadi village, works in Auroville Health Services



«The work at Well paper involves more sitting; due to this it generally causes health problems like digestion issues and other related problems. Many people complained about health and very often took holidays. But after this health program, there were fewer complaints. Also, now everyone feels that they have better health. This class empowers and stimulates self-confidence. I've noticed so many changes in my living after this program. I changed my food habits and I am more conscious about my health and also of my family. Now I have seen good health results, no chronic back pains or tiredness, digestion problems, etc.

Whatever I have learned in the health class, I always share with my family and friends, and now even my husband and children practice. My husband has also experienced some positive changes like no chronic back pain or feeling of tiredness after practicing yoga routine daily. Now being as conscious about diet as me, he also started having herbal tea instead of other, and lessened his tea addiction.»

Poorani, 38, Allankuppam, works in Well Paper



«Before I joined the health program, I had kidney stones problem and also some psychological problems. Now practicing yoga makes me feel better without pains. I'm practicing Yoga everyday and regularly with my children. The program also taught me about natural healing and medicine, after 7 months of yoga, my medical scan reported that now my kidney is functioning normally and my body has eliminated all 9 kidney stones I had before. I believe the healing is in the habit we practice, and if I change I can see my health problem also change.»

Sudha, 37, Allankuppam village, works in Well Paper

Plan of Action

The Thamarai Learning Centre is in a temporary rent-free building thanks to the generosity of a partner of our work. As mentioned earlier, we have received stewardship of two pieces of land from Auroville to build a learning centre and other facilities for Annai Nagar village.

We are preparing a fundraising campaign to secure the resources needed for this development. In the meantime, we will invest in continual training programs for our youth facilitators to build a strong foundation for the project in the future and in resources that will help in improving the quality of the education we provide. This year, we aim to put special emphasis on English, Digital literacy and the concepts of integral education.

We also dream about scaling our services to other villages, reaching to more children and youth with an upgraded holistic pedagogy, health programs and developing leadership

and capacity programs for all that can help create an enabling environment for community development. Thamarai is operated in a transparent and accountable manner and we strongly believe everyone should have a quality and fulfilling education, healthcare and opportunity for personal growth and development.



Bridget with after-school children

Financial Report

Income & Expenditure Account Thamarai 2017-2018	In rupees
Income	
Contribution- India & Auroville	1,90,239.85
Contribution- Outside India	12,00,417.85
Total Income (A)	13,90,657.70

Expenditure	
Health Education and Well-Being Program	2,74,340.47
Playgroup	88,150.00
After-school, facilitators training and weekend programs and excursions	5,96,126.51
Support of other after-schools	35,124.00
Total Expenditure (B)	9,93,740.98
Income over expenditure	3,96,916.72

Note:
Playgroup has fee contribution for its support.
Excess income in this year is a contingency for ongoing running expenses and the building development.

Appendix

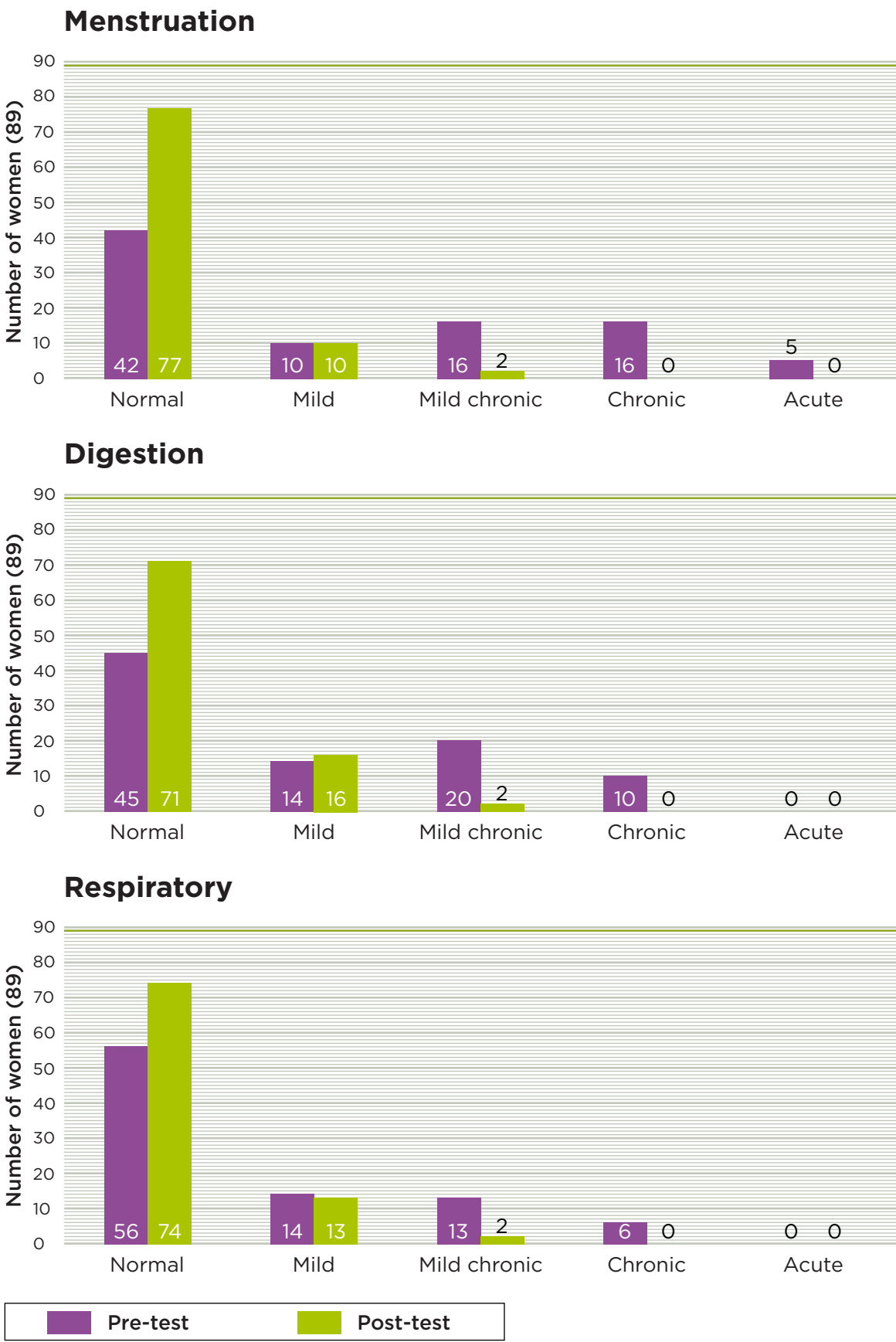
Survey

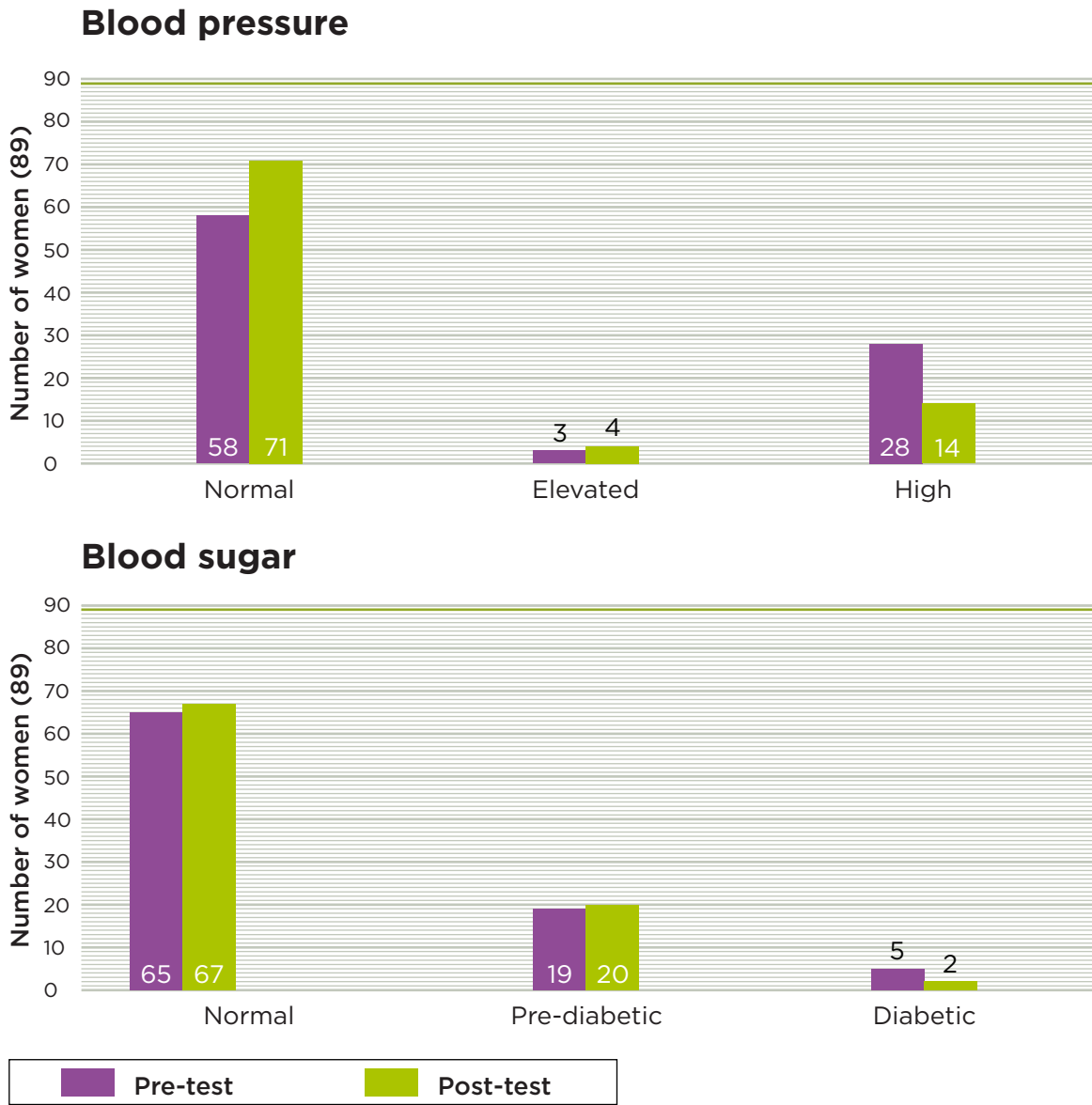
	Quantity
Alankuppam Revenue - Annai Nagar infrastructure	
Primary School	Nil
Private School	Nil
Angan Wadi - Pre-school	1
Library (not in function)	1
Veterinary Hospital	Nil
Municipality Borewell	3
Water Tank OHT	1
Water Station	Nil
Community Hall	1
Primary Health Centre	Nil
EB Office	Nil
Cooperative Bank	1
Cooperative Milk Society	1
Ration Shop	1
Petrol Bunk	Nil
Bharathiyar Bank	Nil
Funeral Place / Burial Ground	1 each
Sports Ground	1
Pond	Nil
Temple	1

Population	
Male	752
Female	756
Total Population	1508
Total Number of Family	135
BBL	132
ABL	3

Houses	
Concrete Houses	1176
Hut Houses	34

Healthcare Program Statistics





**Picture of the ground we are currently developing for sports*

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