Promotion of sports and culture in Auroville and the Bioregion
by Auroville Sports Resource Centre

Amount allocated: Rs. 10,00,000

Abstract:
This project is an umbrella for various sports, cultural and life skill activities which are organized under the supervision of Auroville Sports Resource Centre for beneficiaries in Auroville and the five surrounding panchayats. The aim of this project is to foster healthy physical activity, role-model positive lifestyle habits, stimulate excellence, provide opportunities that can arise through sports, and build unity and harmony between Auroville and the local villages.

Support for this project was granted in two categories: (1) creation of a Kalaripayattu arena and facility, which will provide opportunities to learn and practice this traditional Indian martial art; (2) support for the project holders’ overall priorities in their other initiatives including Auroville Nature Camp; basketball, Kabbadi, tennis and table-tennis leagues; rural youth volleyball training; promoting physical education in government schools of the bio-region; and events specifically for local women.

Q2 report (July – September 2017):

Tennis:
We have registered the Auroville Tennis Club with the Pondicherry Tennis Association, which helps to motivate especially the younger generation of players. Members now can participate in the Pondicherry tennis tournaments where one gets to play with different levels of players other than the Auroville players.

Our tennis players are making continual progress – the improvement of individual players’ skills is very visible and this is also a motivating factor. Now that we have some additional training materials, many younger players have begun to attend tennis class regularly. We are able to give regular trainings with the help of the materials and with the help of the visiting tennis players from Pondicherry whose levels are superior to our players. One of our younger players too is a National Ranking player, and others improve by playing with him.

Volleyball:
We decided to conduct a regional volleyball tournament for the junior and senior categories on the 13th to 15th August 2017. These dates were chosen to be a celebration of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday and the Independence day of India. We prepared the invitations for the tournament for the different categories, and circulated them to the sports clubs in the 20 surrounding village of Auroville. Then we purchased the materials required for the tournament: balls, net, snacks and refreshment and the trophies and gifts for the different categories and ordered a simple breakfast for all the players who would participate.

The tournament took place at New Creation sports ground in Auroville. Sub-junior boys and girls (under 14 years), junior boys (under 18 years), and senior men participated, about 248 players in all.

We made sure to avoid the usage of plastic bags, etc. during the event and to have all vehicles parked outside the sports ground. We also tried to convey information through our activities about not using plastic and other non-environment friendly materials to the players and the audience. It is a challenge to make the players from the surrounding villages conscious in this way. It is not easy and has to be brought to their notice all the time, in order to change their attitude to towards the environment.
Q3 report (October – December 2017):

- During this 3rd quarter, we were able to purchase a much needed GPS for the Summer Camp programs through the on-line purchase service at SAIIER. We also purchased the i3 computer for AVSRC through the same service.
- The construction of the Kalari arena at Aspiration sports ground has begun.
- For our Experience Adventure and Trekking program, an exploratory group of 4 students and 2 adults made a short trip to Megamalai Hills in the Western Ghats to make preparatory arrangements and bookings for the main trip.
- For Kabaddi, we have been informed that the difficult situation in the Pudhucherry state Kabaddi Association has been resolved. We hope that a date for our Pudhucherry state level Kabaddi tournament in Auroville will be set soon, and in anticipation have begun the preparation work towards hosting the tournament at New Creation sports ground.

Q4 report (January – March 2018), Mirra Women’s Group:

This year, Mirra Women’s Group successfully held a series of Sports events at several villages (2 events in Murtandi, 3 events in Kottakarai, Edyanchavadi, 2 events in Irumbai) including Auroville. Nearly a thousand women (include young girls) participated in the sports program. Also a large number of men, young girls and children participated and encouraged their family members in these events. The sports events are an opportunity to have fun, play together and experience a spirit of team collaboration through cooperative games and mutual encouragement. Furthermore, the participants can try out new activities, build awareness through the body and grow in self-confidence in an environment which is safe and supportive. The events are a time to let go of the daily stresses and tensions associated with day to day working and family life and raise energy in a different, lighter direction.

In response to their participation in the events, the villagers delivered feedback to us accompanied by huge smiles. They showed great appreciation and gave us encouragement to carry on our work. We heard several times from them that they felt that this project was quite extraordinary for the Auroville and the 50th Anniversary celebrations since we were bringing the events to their doorsteps, to their villages. They explained that in our bringing the Sports events to them, they felt that they were being both honored and acknowledged by Auroville. Normally, they would come into Auroville to participate in Auroville life, but sometimes they can feel shy, perhaps a little nervous to open up and interact. This project is an innovation in how we involve and share interactions with the bio-region.

During the events, a space emerged for energetic physical activity, fun, joy and laughter but also and importantly so, for conversation. Ideas and observations around education, sanitation, toilets, fitness, health, employment and women’s empowerment emerged. A lot of gratitude was expressed to Auroville for the improvements in living conditions that have come as a result of its efforts in the bio-region, especially in relation to water access. It shows the warmth and good spirits existing between Auroville and the bio-region and the clear aspiration strongly shared for human unity.

There is a strong perception of women from surrounding villages who work in Auroville that the Tamil Aurovilian women are different and they feel no contact. The sports event is a practical way to experience the common sisterhood shared by the women and build bridges of friendship and collaboration.

The Program has helped to foster the development of the women participants at both a personal and community level. We feel that the Bajaj fund greatly supported the Sports program, a beautiful contribution of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations and to the people who participated.
Musical Chairs

Spoon with lemon
Running race

Water pot race