

## **REPORT FROM PRATYUSHA FOR THE GLOBALGIVING WOMEN'S PROJECT**

My name is Pratyusha, I'm Indian-Canadian, from Ottawa. I just completed my Bachelor's degree in International Development and Global Studies, and I was looking for some language teaching or development-related work before I begin a Master's. I found this opportunity at the Auroville Language Lab and was very intrigued by the Tomatis method, its applications, the nature of work done at the Lab, and how it can contribute to Auroville, and the globe.

I was very excited when I spoke with Mita and she explained the Global Giving Women's Project. The project resonates with what I studied in class about the UN Goals - targeting marginalized populations, and ensuring no one is left behind. As Auroville develops, it is crucial that people in the bioregion also benefit in some way. Learning English in today's world is a key capacity-building tool, it can open doors and provide countless opportunities for these women. I was very excited that I found an opportunity to mix both my development experience and language experience.

When I arrived in Auroville, I met the whole team at the Lab and we discussed the previous round of the project. I was briefed on the structure of the project, and how the Tomatis method works. We discussed the successes and shortcomings of the previous year's project. We knew that the time commitment of two hours a day was one of the biggest obstacles for the women we would like to target. We decided to offer multiple timings, and give the participants the ability to choose which works best for them. We also thought it would be a good idea to target younger girls and women in the 15-25 age group as well. They could have freer schedules than older women, and the team felt that investment in education for girls was something families in this area were already doing. We decided we needed to make advertising material and contact groups within Auroville who may already have access to the women we are trying to target, to share the myriad benefits the Tomatis English program could have for girls and women in the region.

I began working immediately on creating posters and brochures to advertise since I knew it would take time to translate them into Tamil. I also worked with the language classes at the Lab. I sat in and observed the beginner's French and German classes and the English conversation classes. I was able to take notes and observe the various strategies the teachers used and how they explained their material. I also contributed my input when I could see that students were confused. In addition to that, I started

doing some video-editing work as well, working towards a short video dubbed in Tamil, to explain the Tomatis Method to the projected GlobalGiving Women's Groups. With all of these tasks, my schedule was pretty busy! Once the advertising material was ready, I sent emails to various groups in Auroville working with village women to see if anyone was interested in joining.

Suddenly, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the Language Lab was asked to close, as were most activities and public buildings in Auroville. Though I was quite disappointed, I was hopeful that within 2-4 weeks everything would go back to normal. I took this opportunity to make up fun projects with my neighbors, and try cooking new dishes. I started teaching French to my 11-year-old neighbor. She was getting quite bored being stuck at home and this arrangement was great for both of us! I soon found a volunteering opportunity making masks. I enjoy working with my hands and I was getting bored at home, so I decided to sign up! It gave me an excuse to ride my bicycle every day, get some fresh air, all while being productive and helping good people with a good cause. We were a pretty small team with pretty big orders to fill! I suddenly had a new busy schedule between the masks and French classes. In the meantime, the Language Lab decided to clean, sanitize and organize every single part of the Lab, so I came to help with that whenever I could.

Unfortunately, my time in Auroville is coming to an end, though I was unable to accomplish what I set out to do, I still managed to be productive and contribute in some way to global development. I hope that the work I did at the Lab proves useful for whoever comes next, and I am excited to hear about updates on the Global Giving Women's Project once the lockdown has ended.

Though my experience in Auroville was quite different from what I initially anticipated, I am very glad to have had this opportunity. I'm proud to have contributed to the work of the Language Lab, the whole team here is extremely nice and dedicated to their work. Everyone is easy to relate to, they are all welcoming. I felt free to walk to anyone to ask for help or advice. I would definitely recommend the Auroville Language Lab to any volunteer looking for a meaningful, productive, and busy volunteering experience!

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