



Thamarai Educational Projects Annual Report 2019-2020



Thamarai is a registered unit under AVAT (Trust) of Auroville Foundation

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**«True knowledge is not
attained by thinking. It is
what you are; it is what
you become.»**

~ Sri Aurobindo

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Acknowledgements

The academic year of 2019-2020 has been an eventful one in terms of the abundance of support received for our work. This has nourished and renewed us. It has also created an enabling environment for us to open another after-school service and to start our collective dream of building a new learning centre and sports ground for the Annai Nagar village. It has been a year of overcoming many challenges especially as the last week of March heralded Covid-19.

Concerned for the children, our team persevered reaching out each evening with learning phone calls despite the fact of limited phone technology as just 40% of children have access to smartphones. These calls, reliant primarily on voice, were very meaningful for the children in terms of social connection as well as continued learning. Later, as lock-down eased, we added a support table in the village where children could pick up books and resource material while maintaining social distance. Also, adults were assisted with an online connection for services they needed.

We have had great support this year both through mentoring and contributions from the local communities and further afield. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the support of the local communities we serve in Annai Nagar and Edayanchavadi villages – the children, women/youth groups and the elders who support us and co-create activities. Our own diverse team of local, national and international volunteers which makes a rich cross-cultural learning environment, the playgroup teachers, our construction team who are building our new learning centre and sports ground and the nourishing network of mentors who guide us and are a source of direction and creativity.

We are also deeply thankful for all the financial support received this year and in particular the Foundation for World Education, Electric Aid Ireland, fundraising drives in Ireland, Auroville, Australia, Canada and Kedge Business School, France. Also our gratitude for the cooperation of groups such as the Radical Transformational Leadership team, Auroville Land Board, the Town Development Council, the Auroville Teachers Centre, STEM Land, Eco-Femme, Dental Clinic, Auroville Village Action Group, Auromode, the residents of Anithya, the local Panchayat and women's and youth groups.

We hold all of you reading this in our hearts, as part of our Thamarai family and our shared dream for a thriving, equitable and compassionate world for all.

With gratitude,

The Thamarai team

Co-ordinators' Note

By Bridget and Muthukumari



Bridget and Muthukumari

In last year's annual report we shared a dream of building a learning centre. We also shared the children's dream to establish peace through sports, they expressed a wish to develop a sports ground to foster togetherness. We are happy to inform you that both projects are underway on the land given by Auroville, in stewardship to Thamarai, for these purposes. Since the sports ground started, the two youth clubs that were divided have united and, prior to Covid-19, the youth were training the children voluntarily daily in volleyball and football.

We are working closely with all sectors of Annai Nagar community to develop these projects and to build agency through the Stewardship for New Emergence Leadership, so that people realize they are change-makers and are supported to create breakthrough initiatives with value-based solutions for the problems their community faces.

July 2019 was joyous as we opened another after-school in Edayanchavadi village which is fully managed by ex-students of Thamarai and based next to the most marginalised section of the village. It's a humble beginning in a small hut that has room for 20 children and 4 facilitators. The project started with a mosaic floor-making

workshop where the children and the team created their own floor. We are currently developing the outdoor area with the help of the residents of Anithya Auroville.

This academic year we had 100 children coming daily between two after-schools, and 36 children in the daily playgroup facilities. Muthukumari's natural healthcare work has reached over 752 children (of whom 77% tested as anemic) and 73 adults in regular programmes conducted in 12 Government schools. Drinking water tests were also carried out in these 12 schools all with unsatisfactory results. Muthu also facilitated a cumulative number of 500 people from several villages for one-day yoga programmes and had four people move successfully through de-addiction programs and into living an alcohol-free life. We continue to develop leadership of our team by encouraging them and the communities we serve to attend the Stewardship programs carried out now in Tamil and English.

There is much uncertainty as we ease out of lock-down but we look forward to redesigning and adapting with the aspiration of full potential and well-being for all in our hearts. The advent of Covid-19 has shown us how important media connectivity is and we plan to increase resources to both our English and Digital literacy programmes in the coming year.

We also want to concentrate on enhancing children's nutrition and well-being. There are many sweet moments and appreciation offered herewith by our team as we reflect on last year with joy. We hope you enjoy reading and we look forward to the time ahead and continuing our commitment to a thriving world for all.

Our Values and Context

Thamarai (meaning lotus in Tamil) is a project that stands on the values of full potential and well-being for all. Like the lotus flower, we believe each one should have the opportunity to unfold to their fullest.

Co-founded in 2006 by Auroville residents, Kathy Walkling and Bridget Horkan, the project aims at providing equitable opportunities to the children, youth, and families residing in the surrounding villages of Auroville. We are a team of six full-time and twelve part-time volunteers. Thamarai Educational Projects is a non-profit organisation of the Auroville Foundation (functioning under the administrative control of HRD Ministry of Government of India).

Thamarai strives to create an enabling environment for the children and young adults through the following projects :

1. Two after-school centres for a total of 100

children.

2. Community Leadership and Capacity Development programmes for children and youth.
3. Natural healthcare education programmes conducted in community centres and in 12 Government schools in surrounding villages.
4. Alcohol Awareness and De-addiction Services
5. Financial support to a daily playgroup for 36 children.

While Thamarai is for everyone, our primary focus is those in most need. Our educational projects are based in the most marginalized sections of villages and in Government Schools. Our work is to provide access to resources, education and training that builds well being, agency and full potential and that counters poor education, high rates of illiteracy, alcoholism and low income generation.



From left to right: Vignesh, Asaithambi, Jagadeswari, Sunil, Selvi, Rohit, Bridget, Subhalakshmi, Sowmiya, Muthukumari, Dhinesh, Savithri, Karan, Devaki, Aravind, Ananthi, Yolane.



THAMARAI AFTER-SCHOOL

Thamarai hosts two daily after-school facilities for homework support, sports, regular classes in arts, cultural activities and themed core subject classes. Annai Nagar Centre has up to 80 regular children and Edayanchavadi has 20, and a team of 13 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 the 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. Also, all the youth facilitators in Edayanchavadi centre are ex-students of Thamarai. 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. One of the full-time volunteers and after-school facilitator, Jagadeswari, summarises the after-school project's activity report of the academic year 2019-20.

After-school

By Jagadeshwari

This year we have seen a growth in confidence of the children as they are more at ease when speaking in and leading circle time. Their English, maths and digital literacy have improved and they have competed in and won medals in district level Taekwondo competitions. We have also seen a marked increase in their eagerness to lead activity sessions such as crafts and in picking up responsibilities in the centre such as helping with cleaning, preparing snacks and caring for plants.

Every evening the students choose between sports or to arrive early at the centre for a small activity and board games. Sometimes these activities are special programs like puppet shows, exercise or laughter yoga taught by clowns. After that we give healthy nutritious snacks to the children to supplement the food they eat at home as recent health tests show us that many of our children are anemic. After snacks, we focus on the Cambridge English Language Program, a 45 minute English class delivered to children in small groups. Through preparing and teaching the class, we facilitators also improve English at the same time, and every Sunday we attend a 2 hour English class just for facilitators as we struggle with English too. After the English class we focus on homework because most of the parents do not have the literacy skills to help with this



English Class with Jagadeswari

and they expect their children to finish their homework in Thamarai, so we make sure to give importance to that. After homework, children learn from computers or read in the library or do some extra tuition with their group facilitator. Finally, we close with a circle time of rhythms, announcements, acknowledgements of each other and share anything that we have learned.

Weekends

Every Saturday we do different activities like paper puppet shows or stewardship leadership sessions with the children. In these sessions, each student takes a topic and works independently on it. This academic year, we started a program with STEM Land (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) for our children to be well-equipped with mathematics. Poovizhi from STEM Land facilitates a 2-hour session where she teaches maths in an easy and engaging way. These sessions include using a Dienes block to visualize arithmetic calculations, Rubik's Cube and playing games and other group activities. We started a Sunday morning programme 6 months ago called "Happy Sundays" where we have different activities each week. Our children help with cleaning and setting up the place before class. Classes included activities like relaxation dance with Irena, art with Omi, puppetry with Mireille, making "dream catchers" with Tushita, vena music with Shruthi and taekwondo with Karan. We recently started a Saturday morning programme as well. We partnered with Isaimaiyam Trust who offered our students a range of subjects including classical dancing, music, drumming and guitar. The children teach us many things too and we receive their feedback through the Children's Council that is held regularly in the company of a visiting facilitator where the children share their ideas and concerns. We also have a big feedback box where anyone can share ideas and concerns anonymously. We all learn, grow in this process, and enjoy and love coming to Thamarai after school together.

LEARNING CENTRE AND SPORTS GROUND DEVELOPMENT

By Bridget

It has been a dream come true to start the development of a multi-functional learning centre and sports ground on the land given by the Auroville Foundation for the purpose of developing activities for villagers. We have been operating educational services in the villages surrounding Auroville since 2006 in temporary, either rented or pro-bono premises. We are now establishing a permanent home as a stable base for our projects to serve Annai Nagar and other villages.

The development is being implemented in two phases, the first is expected to be completed by August 2020. This will give us a ground floor classroom and open areas plus kitchenette, bathrooms, outdoor study area, sports ground and play area for small children. The second phase will give us two more classrooms and, if fundraising is successful, should be completed by January 2021.

We have a strong commitment to building with natural materials, keeping in mind a low carbon

footprint. Therefore, we are using traditional compressed earth bricks, rammed earth technology, recycled material, as much open area as possible with natural ventilation and light, and compost toilets in order to save water.



The First Steps of Construction

Aligned to our commitment to build agency in local youth, we have hired a team from the local village to carry out the works under the supervision of Raman Architects and our own Thamarai project manager, Vignesh, who is an architect and community worker. Therefore, we are not engaging in the usual way of hiring a construction company, but are working with a skilled, local youth contractor who has proven himself on many other projects with our architect, and local masons.

The new centre will stop the instability of regularly moving the main project base and give long-term security for our current educational programmes, ensuring their sustainability. It will also enable us to expand the programmes we offer in other areas such as adult literacy and early



Inauguration of the Land in November 2019



A Building Sketch of the Learning Centre

childhood development. The building will also be a base to build on our Natural health education programmes to Government schools, women groups and Alcoholism rehabilitation programmes.

As the building is taking shape, children often stop on their way while pointing and saying



The Playground on Inauguration Day



The Construction Site - July 2020

“new Thamarai, new Thamarai”. It is giving hope and a renewed energy that is so needed now with the challenges and setbacks that have unfolded due to COVID-19. We want this structure to be a platform for the emergence of a thriving, healthy community aiding to achieve its full potential.

TRAININGS, EVENTS AND EXCURSIONS

by Savithri and Leo

From the very start of the project it was important to us to work with all sectors transcending caste, class, gender and age. We wanted to learn from the existing wisdom of communities and support their full potential. So instead of creating traditional tuition centres with the teacher at the top of the class, we enrolled the graduates and undergraduates from the villages who became our facilitators to support learning in a big sister and brother atmosphere.

We believe that strengthening capacity in youth is key to sustainable community development and it also creates a fertile ground for meaningful education to emerge. Therefore, investment in

exposure, growth and learning are an essential part of life in Thamarai.

Each of us is a student and a teacher so we have shared learning platforms and many opportunities during the year to enhance our learning in training, events and an excursion visiting other projects of best practices.

In addition, all team members attend Stewardship for New Emergence Leadership training and Child Protection training annually. There is also a regular connection with the Auroville teacher's Centre. Below you will see the training and highlights of 2019-20.

Training Highlights



1- Aishwarya Art Session

Aishwarya took us on a river journey through our lives with art where we recalled and acknowledged the important moments

2- English and Digital Literacy

We had the good fortune to have Anand and Mitali as English teachers at various stages of this year.

3- Seeing Each One's Greatness Education Session with Nupur Mahajan

Nupur helped us explore a range of different techniques that inspire positive change in ourselves and children

4- Facilitator Training in Annai Nagar After-School Facility

A week-long facilitation training programme with the team.



5- Leadership Session With Sri Latha on Internal Organization

We were reintroduced to radical transformational leadership tools and guided to use these tools on individual projects.

6- Community Leadership Session With Sri Latha and Suriya on TAN (Thriving Annai Nagar)

The participants discussed what they stand for, what were the problems and how they wanted the village to be in five years time. The session explored how to take the first steps.

7- Teacher Training Session in Udavi School for the Core Team Facilitators

Marion gave phonics training to our facilitators.

8- Neuro Dramatic Play (NDP) Course

NDP was a one-week programme conducted by Dr. Sue Jennings exploring play and drama as a therapeutic teaching method for children.

9- Child Protection Training

Suryagandhi took the children through a session on safe and unsafe touch and strategies to identify and report harmful practices. Added to our in-house annual training for our team, Stefanie Fried, a Child protection officer from Save the Children Germany, offered an enlightening session on children protection and answered our many questions.

10- Radical Transformational Leadership Sessions with Monica Sharma

We have been fortunate to have an all Thamarai team two-hour session, with the former director of leadership and capacity development with the United Nations, Dr. Monica Sharma. Monica guided an inquiry while our team shared what they cared about, what changes they wanted to see and were committed to, and their project plans. We were also delighted to be present in several public sessions Monica held in Auroville.

Event Highlights



1- Floor Making in Edayanchavadi

Our Thamarai children, along with one of our facilitators having experience in construction, worked together to build the floor of their new education space.

2- Endangered Craft Mela in Auroville

Each year Auroville hosts the Endangered Craft Mela where craftspeople from various parts of India share their skills with children.

3- Children Film Screening in Schools

Children took part in a 3 month Radical Transformations Leadership program where they shoot 13 films. The films were screened in two Government schools and as part of the Auroville Film Festival.

4- Taekwondo Tournament

Karan, an international taekwondo practitioner and Auroville youth, who has represented India in Asian games, has been training our children with

Taekwondo drills and training methods.

5- Ground Clean-Up

After Diwali (festival of light), there was a lot of rubbish in our sports field, so the Thamarai team and children did a full clean-up of the grounds.

6- Thanksgiving Lunch for our Friends

We wanted to thank our friends in Auroville for their support, so we organised a thanksgiving lunch where the village women's group cooked a delicious south Indian thali for all of us.

7- Visit of an NGO - Arunodhaya

Working on child rights, child abuse and child marriage for almost a decade, Arunodhaya visited us to share about the significant work they have done in and around Chennai and to learn about our work.

8- Christmas Camp

The children decorated a Christmas tree and enjoyed this joyful celebration.



9- Divalto Group Visit to Thamarai and the Village

Thamarai has been supported by many people from all around the world. We were happy to welcome Divalto whose European managers were on a tour of Southern India.

10- Edayanchavadi After-School Opening

We were delighted to open this new centre. Previously, 17 children were doing their homework in a Thamarai alumni's house, so we're very grateful to Anithya residents for sharing this space for our children to play freely and study once the sun has set. We are working on developing kitchen gardens and play areas for the children in the near future.



12- Pongal Celebration

Pongal is a traditional Tamil harvest festival. This year, the children spoke about Pongal, performed Silambam martial arts, stick dances (Kollattam) and classical dances. We also played games with everyone and ended by having a traditional sweet Pongal rice dish and sugarcane.



11- Architecture Workshop in Edayanchavadi Learning Centre

We have been blessed to have two groups of architecture students teach our children construction techniques including brick masonry, wattle & daub, brick arches, ferrocement and bamboo construction. Together with these students, our children built their new learning space on Anitya land and all had a wonderful and enriching experience.



13- French Group from Kedge University

They have been actively fundraising for Thamarai and every year come to visit. This year, seven students spent three weeks with us, teaching French, English, games and songs. They also made a film with the students and installed a water treatment system for us.



14- ACU-DETOX TRAINING

Muthukumari worked together with Dr Linda Lee, an acupuncturist and Doctor of Chinese medicine, to create an acupuncture workshop focusing on acu-detox and NADA protocol for well being. These sessions took place in the Thamarai office in Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo society in Pondicherry.

15- Happy Sundays on the Move

This idea came out of a wish from our children to have more time for extracurricular activities. We worked together to design a 'Happy Sunday' schedule with different activities each week including dance, music, IT, art therapy and taekwondo.

16- Summer Camp (2019)

Every year Thamarai conducts a two-week summer camp designed by the children to experience various skills and have lots of fun. This year, it was filled with sports, art, crafts, dancing, relaxation classes, cooking, drama, language classes, puppe-



try and more, and they finished with a talent show, showcasing all their newly acquired skills.

17- Book Fair to Illaigarkal School

As part of our learning exposures, the children were taken to the book fair hosted by the Illaigarkal learning centre in Auroville. Illaigarkal is an alternative learning space for the students from the village where they work with technology and do self-directed work. This was a good opportunity to show this resource to our children and explore many books!

18- Health Camp in Annai Nagar

Well-being is an underlying principle of Thamarai. Muthukumari, who does health programmes in 12 schools locally, also trained our children to conduct basic health check-ups like blood pressure and eye tests. This time, we took it to the village and had a health camp where we organised a space for diabetics, dental health and the Acu-detox check-up and programmes.



Trip to Mahabalipuram

By Jagadeshwari

An educational trip took us to the historical monuments of Mahabalipuram where we looked at the architecture and sculptures. It is a town that lies between the Bay of Bengal and the Great Salt Lake, in Tamil-Nadu. It's known for its temples and monuments built by the Pallava dynasty in the 7th and 8th centuries. The seafront Shore Temple comprises of three ornate granite shrines. Krishna's Butter Ball is a massive boulder balanced on a small hill near the Ganesha Ratha stone temple. On the way, we also visited and learned about the Kaluveli watersheds and how our water system for the state works, how salt is made and we also



learned about mangroves and how important they are for water conservation. The children also enjoyed their time relaxing on the beach and roamed around the street markets.

Adyar Poonga Eco-Park, Chennai

By Vignesh

As a part of the Thamarai learning journeys, the most memorable visit this year was to Adyar Poonga Eco Park in Chennai. This large-scale restoration project was led by Auroville Pitchandikulam Forest Consultants who also



have a dedicated education centre and a natural art installation for schools around the area to learn more about ecology.

Almost 50 of us (grades 7, 8 and 9 with facilitators) went on this trip and were given a guided tour by the environmental experts working with the education team. The children were told about the ecological restoration that



has taken place to create the Eco-system of the Coromandel Coast that encompasses fresh-water ponds, brackish areas, mangroves, mud flats, dunes and islands. The information centre is one of the educational focus of the park and children go there to watch the creek's birds, turtles, reptiles and other animals. One of the highlights of the Eco-park is the presence of water bodies surrounded by typical vegetation found in a Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (our indigenous type of forest).

The Bio-resource Centre illustrates the uses of plants and their relationship to humans through an interesting and fun display. The children were also taken through a working model of an environmentally sustainable building that demonstrated water collection, conservation and treatment, energy-efficient alternatives such as solar, bio-gas and wind power, waste management techniques and Eco-friendly building materials. The use of non-conventional energy was demonstrated in a practical way for the children to see how energy is derived from sunlight, wind and biomass.

Towards the end of the session, the children were shown several films to understand how humans are affecting nature and how we can restore nature by making minimal and meaningful interventions so that the world can be a better place for living organisms to co-exist and flourish together. The Q&A session at the end was full of the children eagerly asking questions and clarifying their doubts.



Sadhana Forest Trip

By Vignesh

Sadhana Forest, an Auroville project located in the bioregion, is a world-renowned project focused on afforestation, community living and self-sustainability. Sadhana Forest has supported Thamarai since the beginning and we were glad to spend time here and introduce the children to their philosophy of work.

On arrival, the children had an enriching vegan breakfast experience eating delicious locally grown millet, nuts and fruits, and then were taught how to separate waste and wash their plates using natural soaps and low water usage techniques.

After breakfast, we had an introduction from Jazz, the children's education tour coordinator. The children were amazed to see a European man speaking Tamil and explaining to them the importance of nature and how they can participate as young dreamers to make this world a better place for all. We then walked through the forest to explore different sustainable techniques like bicycle-powered batteries, solar panels and windmills that allow Sadhana Forest to be self-sustaining and completely off-grid.

Jazz introduced the local flora and fauna, and the way they can be used in our daily life. We also visited the animals, including the cows in the 'Goshala'. Sadhana do not milk the cows as they are a vegan community and don't believe humans should take anything from animals. Instead, all the milk goes to the calves.



Finally, after all this learning, we settled in 'Children's Land'. This is an area based on the philosophy and values of child-led learning which states that children intuitively know what and how to learn for themselves and can learn what they need to with the trust, observation and support of the adults. Children's Land embodies this philosophy as a safe place for local children to freely explore their passion, allowing them to make positive changes in their lives.



In Children's Land, they provide a natural environment to appreciate nature and self discover reasons to engage in conservation and sustainability. In this way, the children are empowered to think creatively, independently and collaboratively. Activities are offered based on the children's interests and children have the freedom to choose, often, they choose to water the gardens, paint, draw, cook, build, play games and plant trees. Since 2009, they have designed the land with the children, which includes planting trees, a small garden and building a compost toilet and a small recycling station.

We all had a fun and enriching learning experience about nature, the environment, animals, plants and how children can be part of the change that the world needs in the present and future.



The Programme in Tamil

LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A core element of Thamarai's work is leadership/stewardship development and practice.

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 the workplace and in our 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.

Stewardship for New Emergence

By Bridget

This year, we saw a marked increase in confidence and agency in our team and children after attending multiple Radical Transformational Leadership programmes led by Professor Sri Latha Juvva from the Tata Institute for Social Science and Suriya Prakash, professor from Johnson College, who helped us all identify the existing problems, the changes we want to see and to create value-based solutions.

We also had the privilege of having a private session and attending multiple public sessions with the creator of the programme, Dr. Monica Sharma in August 2019. We also hosted community sessions where village elders, women, youth and children came together to envision the future for their village. Their dreams are beautiful, a tapestry of harmony and well being for all with lush vegetation, clean water, effective waste management, sports, livelihood, adequate housing and nutrition for all.

Also, the children made 13 films last year on their dream projects and in February 2020 these films were screened as part of the Auroville Film Festival. The children were so excited to see themselves on the film posters and on the

big screen. We are committed to make these dreams come true in children-led community projects.

Dr. Monica Sharma is the former Director of leadership and capacity development with the United Nations. Many of the current Thamarai team have been trained directly by her for the past 6 years, and our new batch of youth facilitators and older children have taken the training with local practitioner coaches. The training has supported us to see that each one can play a part in creating value-based solutions to local problems by sourcing their inner power, understanding the systems and conditions that create or sustain problems and design their own solutions to everyday problems.

Ongoing practice groups are a supportive structure for positive steps towards change, it creates 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.



Stewardship Programme for the Children



PLAYGROUP

The Playgroup offers play activities that aim to provide a balance between sensory-motor and psycho-social development. We support 36 children, two to three-year-olds, in a 5-day, 9 am - 3 pm, activity-based learning environment.

The playgroup was created and is financed by Thamarai Educational Projects under the management of Udavi School, an Auroville outreach school. Most of the children are from Edayanchavadi village where the school is based. All the children are assured a place for further education in Udavi School.

Playgroup

By Malliga

In this academic year, children were given many activities which encouraged them to come to school with great joy. The activities were aimed at developing their fine and gross motor skills, sensory skills, social skills, mathematical and practical skills. Teachers happily imparted the curriculum through different activities like games, drawing, clay, field trips, wooden blocks and creative hand crafts.

All topics were taught by using different living and non-living objects, flash cards, songs, stories, drawings and field trips. The topics covered included colours, flowers, fruits and vegetables, parts of the body, vehicles, numbers (1-10), birds, domestic and wild animals and insects. The children also explored festivals like Pongal, Diwali and Christmas that were celebrated by wearing traditional outfits to school on these festival days.

The children were taken on field trips to different places of interest like the Botanical Gardens, temples in the bio-region, the Matrimandir and the Faith Farm. Through this, they had the

experience of exploring environments beyond the school campus where they learned many new things and feasted their senses. Faith Farm and the Matrimandir were particularly enjoyed, especially watching the domestic animals and traveling in big buses.

The complete trust the children have in us is magical for us as teachers. They seem to believe in us with their whole heart and trust us as if we were their parents.

Every day, we have a sharing time between the staff, where we sit together and share our feelings, difficulties, joyful moments and plan our day. We value this sharing time highly and believe it makes our team grow stronger.

This year, our team attended a workshop with Marion, an Aurovilian phonics teacher, focused on teaching children phonics according to their needs and levels. This workshop resulted in effective changes to the curriculum and has been a learning highlight of the year for us.





HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The Mobile Health Education and Healing Project cares for well-being for all. This project aspires to:-

- 1) empower adults and children towards cultivating well-being by building up body, mind and soul,
- 2) spread knowledge of Indian traditional healing methods and
- 3) educate present and future generations on these methods in order to raise standards of health and well-being.

This project has:

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

Healthcare Programmes

By Muthukumari

A baseline survey was carried out in Government and Auroville outreach schools in twelve different villages in the Auroville bio-region. This survey assessed health and well-being levels, specifically focusing on hemoglobin levels and self-reported psychological issues. A total of 825 participants were surveyed (752 children and 73 teachers and school's culinary staff).

This data revealed health issues including anemia, stress, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, kidney failure, alcoholism and domestic violence at home. A total of 579 out of 752 children (77%) were identified to be anemic. It also appeared that there was limited awareness and understanding of traditional Indian well-being practices.

Out of 752 children, 52 were identified with mild visual deficits (tested through the Snellen eye chart).

Bacteriology water hygiene tests were conducted with the help of AV EMS Lab and identified water as "not safe" across ten schools.

Children surveyed were often physically and psychologically affected by unhealthy

household practices including lack of access to clean water or healthy food or physical education, and exposure to alcoholism, economic stress, domestic violence and poverty.

Intervention

A Health Education Program was received by 825 children, teachers and school cooks and included activities such as: yoga, energy healing, health education (including personal and menstrual hygiene, anatomy, physiology, water safety and nutrition), supply of plants for the creation of small gardens for medicinal herbs and basic fruit and vegetables, testing of hemoglobin levels, eye tests, and water tests. Additionally, blood group tests were done in two schools for 62 children as requested by the school principals.

A Well-being program was also designed for local villages including yoga and education on healthy lifestyles. This included a one-day workshop on well-being and yoga asanas each in five villages, attended by approximately 500 people (children & adults of both genders) on International Yoga Day.

Four people were supported through a 30-day alcohol de-addiction programme followed by



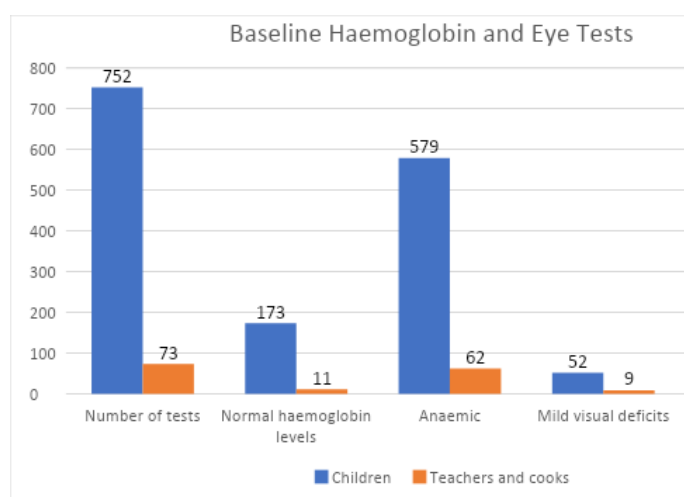
spirulina drinks for hemoglobin increase/ Dental camp in Annai nagar village

weekly Alcohol Anonymous (AA) meetings.

The 52 children identified with mild visual deficits received eye exercise training.

Water systems are in the process of being cleaned to create safe drinking water for all twelve schools.

A detoxification treatment and well being training with acupuncture was facilitated by acupuncturist Linda Lee in Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry.



Outcomes

The project created a bridge between local Government schools and Auroville projects including Pitchandikulam, Eco-Femme, Illaignarkal Education Centre, Laughing Yoga and Matrimandir, and we hope that these connections will continue to benefit each other into the future.

Personal Success Stories

Pachiamma is 23 years old and a mother of a two-year-old child. She has had a severe migraine and thyroid issues for the past two years and was regularly at the hospital, on medication and stressed. Her child was also unable to walk. Pachiamma attended the yoga and health-healing sessions for 6 months and her recent scan came out as normal. No more medication, headaches or thyroid issues. She is continuing with her Pranayama (breathing work) and some healing techniques at home and her health is good. She also learned baby massage techniques which she has been using on her child daily and now the child has learned to walk.

Anju, speaks highly of the alcohol de-addiction program which has been a huge success for her husband. Their family life has greatly improved as a result with the household being peaceful and the money earned being used for the family rather than for alcohol.

The **school principals** were full of praise for the programme and have noticed positive changes in their children's engagement at school and overall health and well-being.

Conclusion

The post-test health data from the schools is yet to be fully gathered and analysed (to be continued following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions), but based on the quantitative and qualitative results gathered so far, we expect to see notable positive changes in the health and well-being of participants. We look forward to the coming year for furthering this work and taking up alcohol de-addiction as a theme area to which we would like to bring a positive change.

TESTIMONIALS

By Thamarai's Facilitators

Our facilitation team

In Thamarai, we train graduates and undergraduates from the villages to become After-school facilitators to support the younger generation with their studies. Many of our current facilitators are alumni. Here is what some of them have to say about themselves and Thamarai :



«My first experience with Thamarai began as a student a couple of years ago. I was delighted to be part of Thamarai as a student then, and now it has been a great experience to work as a facilitator. When I stepped into Thamarai as a facilitator it gave me such joy and reminded me of my childhood memories. Since the time I have started working with the kids, I have learned many things from them. I really enjoy the way in which we work in Thamarai. This is a great place for children to improve their skills with many different activities. I'm really looking forward to the new building in my village and how it is going to make a change.»

Mamuthi



«First of all, I'm very proud to be part of this beautiful project. Thamarai has been a great learning space for me, where I learned how to speak in English and communicate with people from different parts of the world. The children from my village are getting great support in education and extracurricular activities. The team which we have at the moment has been a great support for me to progress in my work. I have a sense of family when we all work together. The leadership program has also been a great support for me in my personal and professional life. When we did the evaluation session last year, it was very interesting for me to see the projection of the Thamarai in the year 2030. It is also a great place for me to be myself and have the joy of learning.»

Subalakshmi



«My Journey as a facilitator has completed 2 years now in the after school each day with the children. This year I learned how to be patient with the children and how to handle students' various personalities.

My special moment this year was as a helper in taekwondo class which is a martial art. This gives me energy and above all allows me to see my growth. I also taught basic computer class on Sundays to the children and improved my own skills. Also I learned to deeply listen and be committed and in action. Another happy moment was these lockdown days because I had a close connection with the children, they would call me if I was late for class by phone. I was very happy to speak each day with the children and teach what I know.»

Dhinesh



«Learning is always important to me and sharing it is what I love to do, Interior designing, Arts, Music, Communication, Football, Friendly nature and Nature lover.

There will always be a place to show one's full potential and I consider Thamarai is the right place for me, where I can suggest my ideas and concepts then implement them. I always like to work with kids, they are active, happy and friendly. I also like the concept of supporting the education of the village kids and guiding them towards their dream. Thamarai after-school is a place where I can explore and gain more knowledge. It is something I value more than money and this opportunity happens in Thamarai.

I never will forget the Thamarai song when the kids sang it for me. All the beautiful moments with the facilitators. The events, programs and the trips which we went to with thamarai. The proud moments when the kids share their marks and achievements. I learned many things and am still learning.

Thank you for encouraging me into the thamarai project and all the friends I met in Thamarai (Vignesh, Dhinesh, Karan, Suneil, Jaga, Savithri, Sowmiya, Suba, Rohith, Vishnu, Selvi, Asai thambi, Devaki, Swathi and Ananthi akka).»

Aravind



«First of all thanks to all Thamarai members for this opportunity to be a facilitator in Thamarai. It supports me to learn for myself and teach the children. I enjoy it and my mind relaxes when I spend the time with the children. And another thanks to Thamarai for starting again after school in my village, Edayanchavadi.

When I joined Thamarai in Annainagar there was facilitator's training. The trainer asked to draw my childhood period to remember my memories and happiness. And after that we were introduced to each other one by one. My sweet memories last year were the learning trips to Mahabalipuram and Adayar Pongal ecological parkland. This was my highlight last year.

I would like to learn more in the future that I will be able to pass on to the children. Thank you again dear Thamarai team for always guiding and supporting me as a sister.»

Selvi



«I am 22 years old and from Annai nagar village. My experience in Thamarai has been very interesting. Since November 2019 I have been a part of Thamarai. I see this as the place where I can develop myself with so many activities for knowledge development and also my English speaking skills. I remember my childhood memories while working with the children.

I have also learned how to work with children and different teaching methods. The most memorable moment for me in Thamarai so far was when all of us from Thamarai visited the Adyar Eco park for an educational trip. It was a great time for me to get a better understanding of ecology with the children and team of facilitators.»

Asai Thambi



«I feel happy and thankful to be a part of Thamarai. I started my journey in Thamarai a couple of months ago. This has actually helped me to learn how to be a facilitator, how to work with children and make them feel comfortable while encouraging them to learn. I really like the extra-curricular activities that happen in Thamarai such as the art, dance and various things. Working with children has personally helped me a lot to improve my skills. I feel very blessed and delighted to work in Thamarai because here I can really contribute to the growth of a child's future.»

Swathi



«I have always been interested in learning and teaching. The thing I like about Thamarai is that we don't follow the conventional system and run like a blind horse. Here we let the children be creative by exposing them to various skills that they can explore. Thamarai has been a great learning platform for the children of my village. I realized this deeply when one of the parents told me how the child has improved in various skills which they would never get access to in a conventional system of education. When we teach children we also tend to learn so many things. Here the children are able to explore their inner capacity and be who they really want to be. After coming to Thamarai my English has really improved a lot and my capacity to speak in public also has improved. The most memorable moments for me were the site inauguration for the new building in our village which was a great dream for all of us for many years. I really loved the Thanksgiving lunch event where we served the traditional south-indian thali for our friends from Auroville, who have been supportive and then they served us. The team has been a great support for me to grow, it is such a great team and I hope that in future that we get more motivated youth to come and be a part of this beautiful dream. I will do my best to enroll others when we get started functioning in the new space. Looking forward to a better future.»

Ananthi



«First I have to say thanks to all at Thamarai for giving me the opportunity to be on the team. Thamarai has always been home for me ever since I was a child. It taught me how as a good student and to be a gentleman. The purpose of joining here was to teach something to students but what is also happening is that they are also teaching me. So I am able to improve my skills and teach some easy tricks for learning to the students. I can see my development and theirs.

The daily sessions conducted by phone during COVID 19 is a good idea for both students and facilitators. It creates a bond and closeness between the students and facilitators. I feel I spend my time now in a meaningful way.»

Vishnu



«First and foremost I would like to thank Thamarai for taking me in the facilitation team. Thamarai has always been a home for me ever since I was a kid. It has taught me how to be a good student, it has taught me several life skills which are very useful for me in overcoming hurdles in my life. As a student I've benefited a lot and I'm grateful for it. And after many years, this academic year, it was a comeback for me in Thamarai, but as a different person. As a more responsible youth who wants to share his wisdom and energy passing on the skills, knowledge and experience to the next generation of thamarai children and learning from them.

The most valuable and unexpected thing I got in Thamarai is the beautiful team who are no less a family. My team members are very supportive, talented and genuine people from whom I learn a lot of things for life. My favorite moment is our gatherings, our small outings and potlucks. Another thing which I'm very thankful for is the opportunity to attend the stewardship Leadership program. The program has been a life changing event for me, it made me realise who I am and made me see the world from another angle. Again thamarai is still playing its role in teaching me life skills which will be useful for me in being successful and having a meaningful life. For me, Thamarai is a place for never ending education and progress. I'm grateful from the bottom of my heart to be a part of this wonderful team.»

Sunil



«I'm really proud of myself to be a part of Thamarai. I started my journey in 2017. Since then I have learned a lot, especially English, Art, and Tuition skills. Thamarai has facilitated many programs for children and facilitators on various topics like health, culture and environmental awareness. First time I stepped into Thamarai I had no idea how to work with children but the team was very supportive to me and I have learned a lot. The extra-curricular activities have given me a great opportunity to learn many things. The internal training programs which Thamarai has offered has helped me. In 2019 we did a review and an evaluation program. It was so good to be in the program and imagine the greatest impact of our work in the year 2030.

Stewardship has played a very important role in my Thamarai journey. After going through stewardship leadership training I have learned to speak in front of the public without any fear. I even learned how to design a project. My project is about improving Mathematics for the children. It has helped a lot to be in my stand and let go of my fears. Whatever I have learned through these workshops has not only helped me with my work place but also my personal life. Thamarai has been a place of growth and joy of learning.»

Sowmya

TESTIMONIALS

By Thamarai's Students

How do you see Thamarai?

«Great learning space, a place to be myself and be happy. I have the joy of learning when I'm in Thamarai.»
Harini (10 years old), 5th std

«Thamarai has taught me to speak in English and also to be confident in whatever I do.»
Krithika (13 years old) 8th Std

«Thamarai is very helpful for me with my homework support.

I learn a lot of activities when I'm here.»

Gowtham (14 years old) 9th Std

«I learned to communicate in English and be confident in whatever I do.»
Prakash (10 years old), 5th std

«I have been part of Thamarai for the past three years and I see it as a place which offers the joy of learning and learning skills like the computer, Silambam (Martial arts). I like computer classes very much. It has been helpful for me in many ways.»
Vignesh (12 years old) 7th Std

What do you want to see in future?

«I want to learn new games and learn new facts about the world and nature around us. I want to learn to create new innovative machines.»
Gowtham (10 years old), 5th std

«I want to see Thamarai as a peaceful learning space for the kids to learn and grow.»
Keerthana (13 years old) 8th Std

«My memorable moment was the magic show and Pongal celebration.»

Monisha (11 years old) 6th Std

«All the celebrations which we do in Thamarai are memorable moments for me. Especially the trip to Matrimandir and the cycle trip.»
Dinesh (13 years old) 8th Std

«I would like to be a volunteer in Thamarai and teach whatever I have learned from here.»
Asha (14 years old) 9th Std

Your most memorable moment In Thamarai

«I really liked our trip to Adyar Eco-park we had very nice ride in the bus and also learned so many things about the importance of environment and the role we can play in making it a better place.»

Rajan (14 years old) 9th Std

«My most memorable moment was when we had the French volunteers to visit us and we had a lot of fun together with them. I liked the trip to Mahabalipuram as well.»

Vignesh (12 years old) 7th Std

Our response to COVID-19

By Vignesh

COVID-19 highlighted many inequities and hardships that have renewed our commitment in Thamarai to work for the well-being and full potential of all. While there had been a build up of information on the situation on the Coronavirus which gave us time to run a number of health awareness programmes on the subject in Thamarai, the lock-down came very fast.

In the villages where we work, people stayed home. Children found it hard because homes are small, not equipped with the modern conveniences such as computers that children have in urban areas. Also, the lock-down conditions allowed people to leave home for food and medicines only until 1pm. The coloured pencils, activity sheets, books and games that we gave the children before we closed are being well used. Right through the lock-down, the Thamarai team endeavoured to find novel ways to continue our children's learning.

On March 30th, we launched a children's writing and drawing competition, "My Ideal World", for several age categories that will award a prize to everyone.

We started daily educational calls, dropped resources off at children's homes, started a socially-distanced support table in the village as the lock-down eased and supported other

organisations such as Auroville Village Action Group with their food distribution work.

Novel Ways to Continue our Children's Learning

We were concerned about the children, how they were coping and how we could support the continuation of their education, so on April



Open-Desk for the Children in Annai Nagar

6th we created daily learning pods connecting three children, each in their home, with one youth facilitator over the telephone. The daily learning pods give the children and facilitators a means to connect together to nourish their hearts and minds in a structured call designed to give children time to express their feelings, motivate one another, learn something new



Open-Desk for the Children in Annai Nagar / Vignesh working from home

each day and plan for home learning activities. Facilitators reported that the children eagerly learned, being very engaged and attentive. It stretched our team as they are reliant only on voice to communicate ideas without being able to see each other or reference material, so facilitators planned well and used a variety of curriculum material with songs, riddles, interesting facts, stories and activity challenges to create an enabling environment for learning through the phone.

Sixty children engaged daily on these calls and their feedback is very positive. Sunil told us, “I learnt about my interests in activities. Learning like this with friends is very fun and interesting. I learn facts from my friends when I and they start sharing.” In Thamarai the children lead the way indicating their learning preferences to facilitators and leading the Saturday calls.

Going Forward Despite the Material Limitations

We have become very aware of the profound questions that this time throws up about equity and fairness as we see how limited local technology with homes without computers and many even without smartphones. We are also finding that many families do not have a credit balance in their phones so all calls are barred.

Another thing that is arising is the number of daily labourers who are unregistered and thus

outside the system unable to receive government relief aid. Going forward, we in Thamarai are committed to increase our attention toward digital literacy and rights-based education so that people know their entitlements, have connectivity and can self-educate and register for schemes.

For now, it is a joy to serve the children in our daily learning calls that will go on until we are able to gather in person for after-school and weekend activities.

Looking to the Future

By Bridget

At the point of writing this report, we are beginning to ease out of lockdown but are unclear when we will be able to resume regular activities using the COVID-19 safety protocols.

In the meantime, we continue our education calls with the students and our support services to the villages.

We expect that phase one of our new centre will be completed by October 2020 and we look forward to occupying it. We are currently fundraising for phase 2 (two more classrooms) and a playground for small children.

In the coming year, a priority will be to increase both English and Digital Literacy so that the people can harvest the potential that technology has to offer. It will be a priority for us to mobilise resources to achieve this.

We also plan to finish the sports ground in Annai Nagar and look forward to more envisioning sessions with the children, youth and adults to see how we can best utilise the 160 metre land which Auroville gave to us for stewardship.



Children Helping to Clean in Annai Nagar

Financial Report

INCOMES

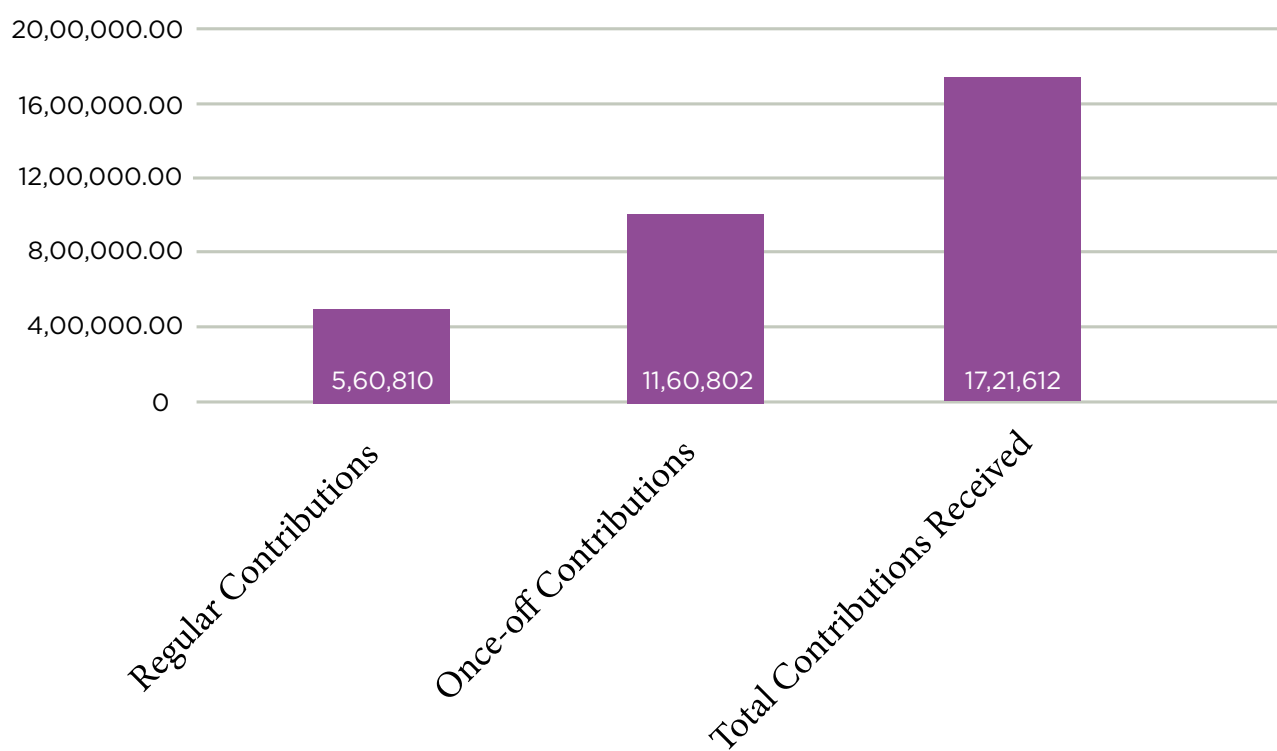
In the financial year 2019-2020 we had income and expenditure for the operations of our Educational Programs and for the Learning Centre and Sports-ground that we are developing.

We received 17.1 lakh contributions for Educational Programs of which 33% were in regular donations and 15.3 lakh for building the Learning Centre.

Incomes & Donations of Thamarai	Rupees	Euros	Dollars	%
Regular Contributions	5,60,810	6729	7290	33
Once-off Contributions	11,60,802	13930	15090	67
Total	17,21,612	20659	22380	100
Note: 15,31,292 rupees were also raised for the development of the Learning Centre				

Once-off contributions made up the bulk of total donations. We will work towards building small regular donations to ensure the long term sustainability of the project.

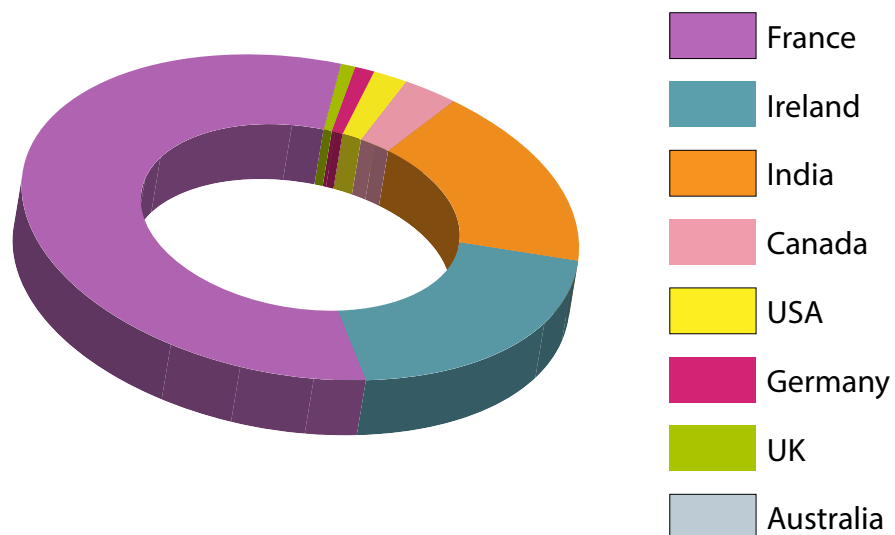
Nature of incomes (in rupees)



Donations by Country

We are lucky to have friends all around the world, here you can see the source of donations by country.

Donations sources by country	In rupees	In euros	In dollars
Contribution from Australia	5,051	60	65
Contribution from Canada	78,066	936	1014
Contribution from France	1,715,556	20586	22302
Contribution from Germany	36,995	443	480
Contribution from India	527,113	6325	6852
Contribution from Ireland	597,242	7166	7764
Contribution from the UK	37,270	447	484
Contribution from the United States	55,610	667	722



EXPENSES

Expenditure Distribution

The following are the areas we spent funds in and the level of expenditure in each.

2019 - 2020	In rupees	In euros	In dollars
<i>Expenditure distribution</i>			
Building and Sports Development	10,15,923	12191	13207
After School Programs	7,19,458	8633	9353
Health Education Program	2,04,301	2451	2656
Personnel	1,92,000	2304	2496
Trainings, Leadership & Volunteer expenses	1,65,785	1989	2155
Administration	97,357	1168	1266
Playgroup Program	84,915	1019	1104
Repair and Maintenance	44,546	535	579
Total	25,24,285	30290	32816

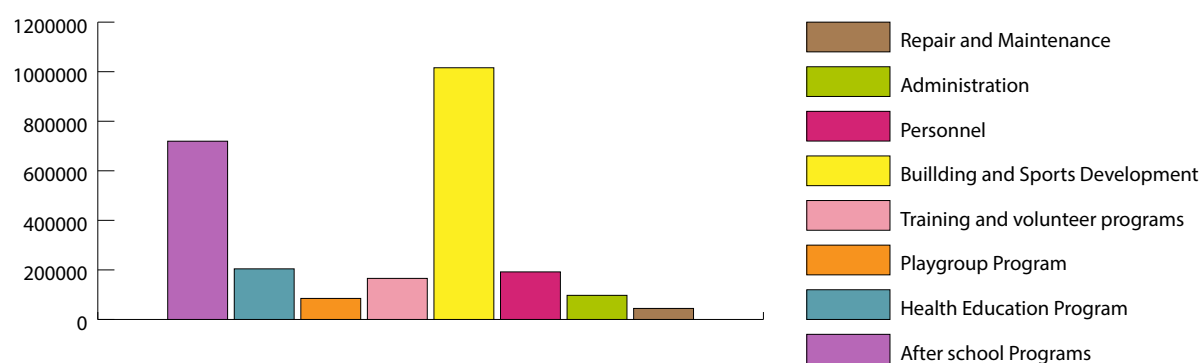
CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPENDITURE

The following are the areas we spent funds in and the level of expenditure in each :

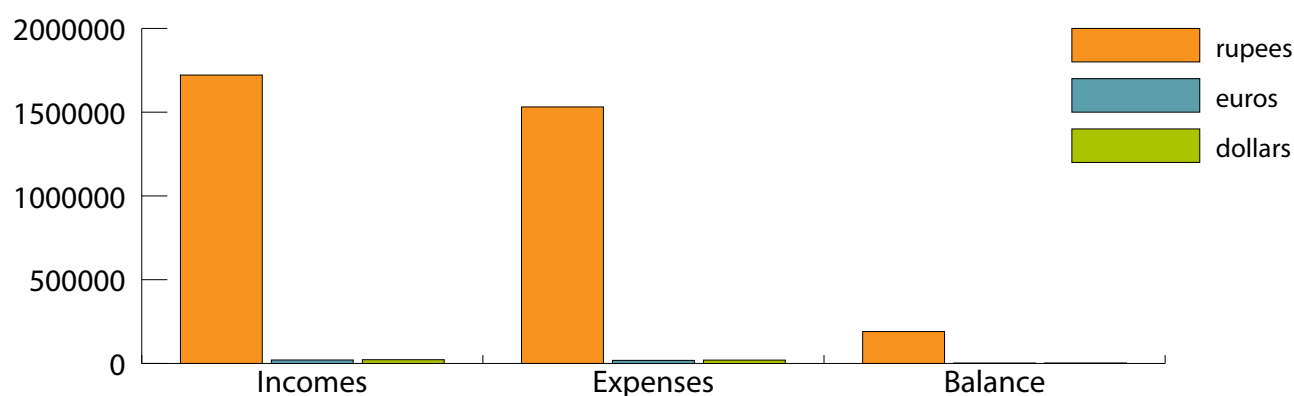
Thamarai's Balance	In rupees	In euros	In dollars
Incomes	17,21,612	20659	22380
Expenses	15,31,292	18375	19906
Balance	1,90,320	2283	2474

Thamarai's Building Development Balance	In rupees	In euros	In dollars
Incomes	15,31,292	18375	19906
Expenses	10,15,923	12191	13207
Balance	5,15,369	6184	6699

Contribution and Expenditure Conclusions



a) Operations balance : This year Thamarai had a positive balance of INR 1,90,320 in our operations budget. This balance will be used for project operations, especially critical during Covid-19. We will continue to fundraise for the coming year encouraging regular donations to ensure the long term sustainability of the projects.



b) The balance on the development account will help us to finish the phase 1 of the new learning centre we are building and plan to have open in October 2020. We hope to raise a further 20 lakh to complete phase 2 which will be 2 extra classrooms and balcony areas.



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