

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the third edition of Svarnim Puducherry's monthly newsletter. With the blessings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Svarnim tries to take on the roles of social and environmental responsibilities in a way that reflects their vision of nature and society relations ought to be. In this endeavour we would be very grateful to receive your feedback and reviews as that would help us move forward together. Thank you for being with us!

ORC - OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHILDREN

Education

This positive mental health program aims to transform children to be future-ready and develop life skills for the 21st century. It is being implemented in 50 government schools.



The IKMS (I Know My Student Solution Card) training programs which began in August had, by the end of September, been completed in 47 schools. The IKMS training is given to the class teachers of government schools. To recap, we have received government approval and extended the ORC program to 50 schools for the current academic year.

Four one-day Smart 40 camps and three 3-day Smart 40 workshops were held in different schools during the month of September 2022.

Besides benefiting the young students, these sessions are also very important for the new members of our



expanding ORC team to learn the ropes as they begin their social service careers.

TEAM DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION

Essential to providing positive mental health services to the students is the need to maintain the quality and update the capacity of our team members.

All our ORC Counsellors participated in a workshop for community welfare workers on the theme "Substance Abuse: Prevention Strategies and Psychological support in the Community". This was organised under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan by the Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University in association with the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE), on 22nd Sept at Pondicherry University.



Group photo of participants at the Workshop on Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan

TEAM APPLICATION

The very next day the ORC team incorporated the lessons learnt at this workshop at a key school event organised to promote awareness among boys and girls on gender sensitisation, prevention of substance use, cyber-crimes and other non-traditional issues. For conducting this event, the ORC team was joined by Dr. F. Jayachandran.

Awareness Camp for
High School Students
9th & 10th standards



On gender sensitisation,
prevention of substance
abuse and cyber-crime

GHS Kanuvapet
Villianur
Puducherry

23rd
September
2022



This would-be center of excellence for hands-on teaching of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics as well as the Arts & Humanities is expected to cater to students of all schools in the middle, high and higher secondary levels of Puducherry.

As in our previous month, preparatory work for this program has been hectic and ongoing. A number of online workshops were held all through August and September as part of the capacity building of our STEM team. In very short order this program is expected to become an important science resource center for Puducherry.

Members of this STEM Resource Centre team are Cayalvizhi, Preethi and Reshma led by Geetha. The team attended a hands-on experiential science workshop at IIT Kanpur's Outreach Centre in New Delhi from 19th to 24th Sept 2022.



The training program itself is a collaborative effort between SAS and JoLF (Joy of Learning Foundation which is head quartered in New Delhi).

The aim of this joint program is to build the capacity of teacher-trainers on experiential pedagogy for science topics. Teacher trainers who participated in this event came from Puducherry, Odisha and the National Capital Region.



The Svarnim team will start local training programs once the schools reopen after Pooja Holidays, in the first week of October 2022. A tentative banner for the same is shown here.

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, they are a helper and a guide. Their business is to suggest and not to impose.

Sri Aurobindo



SHARP – SCHOOL HEALTH ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT



Health

This program under our Health and Wellness Initiative focuses on the health, physical fitness and nutrition of government school students in the middle to higher secondary levels. So far, the Svarnim team carried out interventions in 15 schools of Puducherry District.



As mentioned in earlier editions, Anthropometric measurements provide a valuable assessment of nutritional status of children, and is also useful for evaluating the general health status, and the growth and developmental pattern of the child.

Shown here are the routine height and weight measures being taken by members of our health team. Subsequently, baseline body mass index is derived for all students from 5 to class 8. Targeted interventions are then carried out for students who fall outside the normal range for their respective gender and age groups.



A lot of our targeted interventions are primarily in the form of counseling, training and follow-up, with a focus on student's physical activities, life style habits, nutrition, and group activities. These interventions also include families of the respective students.

Below is a chart summarising the impact of our previous year's interventions with school children having high and low BMI (using IAP guidelines of 2015).

Change after Intervention			
	Boys	Girls	Total
Underweight	-7%	-10%	-8%
Normal BMI	+23%	+27%	+26%
Overweight	-8%	-12%	-10%
Obese	-9%	-6%	-7%



Kitchen Gardens, Managed by Students

One of the group activities for students that is encouraged is the creation and management of kitchen gardens on school premises, and if possible at their homes and communities. The purpose of the kitchen garden is to generate awareness among children on organic farming, the importance of nutrition to build their immunity and to give relevant knowledge about sowing, planting, germination, assessing the growth process, and harvesting.



Svarnim Puducherry has taken up five additional schools this year under the SHARP program. To establish kitchen gardens, work has begun with the identification of suitable space and development of work plans for all the new schools. Once the schools reopen after the Pooja vacations, subsequent steps in the process will be implemented.



Every student managing the kitchen garden learns to maintain a Garden Journal

AHAR - AGRO-HOMEOPATHY (AND OTHER LOW-INPUT METHODS) FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

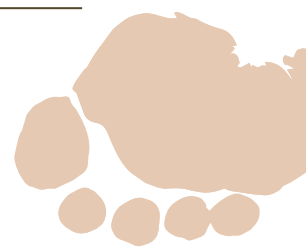
Sustain
-ability

After the success of our pilot on-farm research which is being conducted in a participatory manner with three different farmers in the Bahour area, this season has seen a phenomenal increase in the adoption of agro-homeopathy by the paddy farmers of that region. During September, we also had a planning meeting with Dr Venkatesh Palla on how to scale up this program to the next level.

In anticipation of this burgeoning demand, Svarnim Puducherry has initiated a Farmers Field School program. At the initial stage, these agro-literacy programs are focusing on low-input agri-practices for paddy. So far, these sessions have been conducted with over 40 veteran farmers in the Bahour, Soriankuppam and Koravallimedu panchayat areas.



Our highly experienced field member Mr. Mouniane, himself an agriculturist, addressing the farmers of Bahour



CLEAN COAST SAFE SEA



The "Swachh Sagar, Surakshit Sagar/Clean Coast Safe Sea" program is a 75-day citizen-led campaign for improving ocean health through collective action. The campaign fits very well with Svarnim's ongoing work on taking care of Puducherry's Natural Heritage.

With support from Vigyan Prasar, DST, Govt of India, Ministry of Earth Sciences and Ministry of Science & Technology, and in collaboration with Keep Namma Pondy Clean, Svarnim Puducherry organized a series of events related to the Clean Coast Safe Sea Campaign.

The Beach Clean-up on the 9th of September saw the participation of Mr.PT Rudra Goud, who is the Director of School, Higher and Technical Education, Govt of Puducherry, Dr.TV Venkateswaran, a Senior Scientist from Vigyan Prasar, and Mr. Srikumar from Ariviyal Palgai also participated.



Apart from the beach clean-up, an invited Lecture was given on Coastal biodiversity of India by Dr. Sriperumal Chandrakasan. Dr Chandrakasan is the Director of Zoological Survey of India, A&N Islands. We organised the talk at the Motilal Nehru Govt. Polytechnic College on the 9th September, where the talk was attended by more than 200 students from across Puducherry.

Later various competitions were held on the theme of Clean Coasts Safe Seas. These were conducted in 21 schools, 13 community centers, and two child-care institutions - the Satya Special School and the Udhavikarantal.

Certificates are to be given to all the participants while prizes will be awarded based on evaluation of submissions. Overall, more than 1500 youth and students participated in the program.

Svarnim organised another Beach Clean-up, this time inaugurated by the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Puducherry. This took place on 17 Sept.



WATER LITERACY – WORKSHOPS ON WATER NARRATIVES



As part of our ongoing efforts to sensitize children and youth to the multidimensional values of water, and to improve student's capacity to effectively communicate and narrate their perceptions, Svarnim Puducherry organised multiple workshops during September.

Resource persons for the workshops were Dr Sara Ahmed and Sukrit Sen from the Living Waters Museum, a global program of the UNESCO. In an public talk organized at the Beach Office auditorium, they interacted with members of Sri Aurobindo Society, Auroville and Pondicherry University in a participatory discussion on the connection between the tangible and the intangible, and using the science of water and sound as a form of pedagogy.



Dr Sara Ahmed, founder of Living Waters Museum, India



Water and Music - This workshop highlighted some unlikely connections between water and music, and proved a good way to stimulate children's creativity and curiosity. As an unexpected bonus many students and some of their teachers revealed their musical side, by spontaneously providing percussive music to different traditional songs and poems about water.

Sukrit Sen, on the left demonstrating the linkages between the science of sound and water, and how the two can be synthesized to create music. Below, he is training teachers and students on creating 360 Degree photographs of water bodies.

360 Degree Photography - This innovative visual narrative form was taught to students by utilising the front and rear lens of smartphones, to create 360-degree photos of each school's adopted pond. Photographs generated by the student groups were automatically geotagged and ready to be viewed on Google Street maps by anyone anywhere in the world.



MONSOON FESTIVAL 2022

The Alliance for Good Governance (AGG) and Svarnim Puducherry, presented a proposal for Monsoon Festival at the Directorate of School Education on 15th September. Key participants from the Education Department included teachers from their Science Corner Resource Centre and senior officials like Mr Dinakar who is the State Project Director of Samagra Shiksha, Ms Sivagami who is the Joint Director of Education and Mr.Nadanasabapathy the Deputy Director (Women's Education).



AUROVANAM – A NATURE BASED EDUCATION CAMP (IN-THE-MAKING)



On the left, the recently completed staircase at the nature interpretation center.

Below, one of the first signages to be installed at Aurovanam.

Work at the Nature Centre is progressing well. The DEWATS (decentralised waste water treatment system) unit of the toilet complex and the interpretation center are at advanced stage of construction. Signages on stone slabs and rock paintings have arrived at the site, and will be installed in the coming month. The first phase of the center is nearing completion and will soon be ready for children and adults to come and explore.

The possibility of establishing a mix of physical and digital artifacts was discussed with the resource persons from Living Waters Museum. It was felt that this place had a strong potential for providing augmented reality features that would enhance the educational experience for visitors young and old.



INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS AT SVARNIM

Svarnim had three interns working with us in September '22. M/s Adihyan, Rahul and Hannath from Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University are carrying out their internship block-placement with us until December'22. The interns are being provided extensive field experience through our different projects and a chance to attend the various workshops that we are conducting.

Currently, Svarnim has two volunteers who are focusing on water issues. Mr Adwaita Banerjee, a marine zoologist awaiting his doctoral viva-voce, is helping us part-time to map the stream network draining into the Nallavadu estuary system (South Pondy).

Dr Sudevi Basu, a professor of environmental engineering from Bengaluru recently joined us to help remotely in designing community-based waste water monitoring and treatment systems.