

# Update on the Collaborative Initiatives of AVAG

May 2021



Over the past months, the second wave of COVID-19 has hit our region hard, many village representatives have expressed their deep appreciation for the care and support their village residents have received from Auroville through the Auroville Village Action Group.

This time it is quite a different scenario to the previous wave and has impacted all our neighboring villages badly. Compared to fewer numbers of infected people and no death during the first wave, till the 29th of May 2021, there are more than 200 people infected and 20 deaths officially reported in the 10 villages nearer to Auroville.



Yet, a lot of people are not going to hospitals for testing for fear of infection and death due to hospitalisation.

As many houses in the villages do not have the isolation-facility, other family members get infected easily. We also see a tendency for people not to go to the hospital until their condition is critical. Due to social stigma related to the disease, people try to hide the symptoms and pretend to be normal.

Many people have lost jobs locally, mostly men who worked in cities, have come back to the villages due to loss of job and fear of infection.

The government scheme, MGNREGA, which usually guarantees 100 days of employment in a year for people in rural areas, has not been in operation for more than two months. In normal times, this scheme provides some security for older people, mostly women and the aged, who are unable to access other employment. After the first wave, mostly women who lost their jobs enrolled with this scheme, so the lack of this work is impacting many. Furthermore, the latest government order has banned people above 55 years old and people with co-morbidities doing work under this scheme, which will have far-reaching impacts for those who were reliant on it.

Most of the people are hesitant or afraid to getting vaccinations and this resistance is seen across in Tamil Nadu, which has a low uptake of vaccinations compared to the national average. The non-availability of vaccines is also a matter of concern.

During this time of the pandemic, farmers are expressing difficulty selling their produce due to lockdown restrictions impacting distribution. This is resulting in them having to sell much of their products at a rate that is too low to sustain them. This not only affects them this season but impacts the funds they have available to invest in the next crops.

Reasons like economic stress, unemployment and alcoholism – men in the family drink or did not have the possibility to drink – have contributed to increased violence against women and children.

Overall, the second wave has impacted very badly the physical, mental, social, and economic wellbeing of the people, and the most vulnerable families are the worst affected.

## Response of AVAG

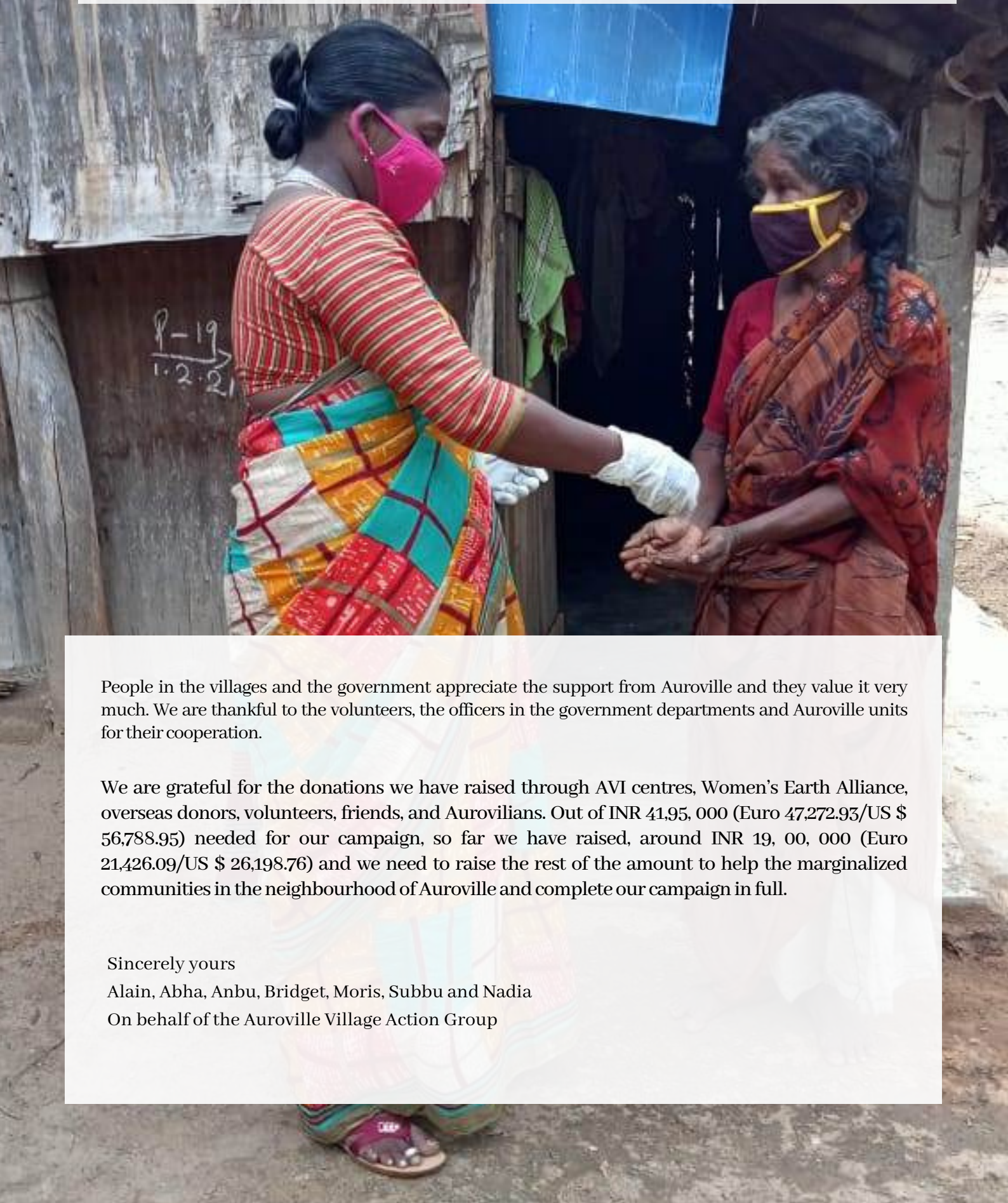


At AVAG, we have (re)launched our collaborative COVID-19 response across the villages we serve, reaching approximately 1 00 000 people in 75 settlements, with a special focus on the neighbouring villages. This is a participatory process, developed with our village representatives, consisting of village leaders, street-level volunteers, youth, women's groups, and sports associations, members of Auroville units and schools, and government officials. It is a collaborative effort that brings together, people of different backgrounds, castes, gender and ages to meet the true need of the communities we serve.

Building on our response during the last wave, we are providing immune-boosting homeopathy, Siddha medicine, and masks, and running a positivity campaign to spread awareness about prevention, health and vaccination. We also provide food essentials to the families of the infected and the neediest, mostly in the neighboring villages.

- We have distributed the first dose of homeopathic immunity booster, to all the 20 000 families, and have completed distributing the second dose to most of the nearby villages. The remaining villages and the women SHG members will get it in one week's time.
- As per the request of the Block Medical Officer, we have distributed the immune booster Arsenicum Album to three more highly infected villages in our block.
- Our women's enterprise, AVAL, have stitched 5000 3-ply masks that are being distributed in the villages, with the priority given to families with infected members and the sanitary workers. We hope to receive more funding to be able to provide masks to all families.
- Our campaign of positivity is focusing on education, myth-busting, related to the disease and providing positive stories of people who have been cured through timely intervention, have been vaccinated or have taken care of their health through immune-boosting lifestyles, and prevention (e.g. wearing masks, hand washing, etc).
- With the cooperation of the village level task forces, we are assisting the government in organising the vaccination camps in the villages with more camps planned. Vaccine stock is not always available.
- The Government is distributing 2000 INR. to all ration card-holders. This will be a huge help for many families, however many single women, older people, migrants, and those who have moved do not hold ration cards and will therefore not be able to access this support. Again, it is often the most disadvantaged people that face the biggest hardships. We are purchasing essential food and hygiene materials to distribute to the families of the infected and most disadvantaged like the single women, aged, physically challenged, and tribal, and those who have lost jobs due to the pandemic. The village-level committees and the panchayats secretaries help us identify the neediest.
- Sante, Integral Health Centre in Auroville has compiled a booklet with alternative therapies which has been translated into Tamil by Auro Traduction. We plan to distribute this in the villages, especially amongst school teachers, Panchayat secretaries, paramedical practitioners, youth, and the women's federation who can help spread the knowledge and awareness.

The lockdown is really challenging, carrying out the activities when the spread is high in all the villages, and restrictions in place. Also we have to train the volunteers in the villages to follow all safety guidelines during interaction and distribution in the villages. Even if one volunteer gets infected, it would affect the confidence level of the rest of them. Thanks to the Divine protection, all of us are safe.



People in the villages and the government appreciate the support from Auroville and they value it very much. We are thankful to the volunteers, the officers in the government departments and Auroville units for their cooperation.

We are grateful for the donations we have raised through AVI centres, Women's Earth Alliance, overseas donors, volunteers, friends, and Aurovilians. Out of INR 41,95, 000 (Euro 47,272.93/US \$ 56,788.95) needed for our campaign, so far we have raised, around INR 19, 00, 000 (Euro 21,426.09/US \$ 26,198.76) and we need to raise the rest of the amount to help the marginalized communities in the neighbourhood of Auroville and complete our campaign in full.

Sincerely yours

Alain, Abha, Anbu, Bridget, Moris, Subbu and Nadia

On behalf of the Auroville Village Action Group

## HOW YOU CAN DONATE TO 'AUROVILLE VILLAGE ACTION GROUP'

Donations are kindly accepted at financial centre account 0226 or by credit card through Auroville donation gateway and though the transfer links and a crowd funding page is given on AVAG web site

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By bank transfer (SWIFT) to the "Auroville Foundation":  
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Purpose: Donation to "AUROVILLE VILLAGE ACTION GROUP"

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New Delhi 110 001  
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By credit or debit card via the Auroville Donation Gateway:  
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### By check payable to the "AUROVILLE FOUNDATION":

All checks must be payable to AUROVILLE FOUNDATION.  
Please send checks to the Auroville Unity Fund at the address below, with a note specifying Auroville Village Action Group and by email kindly inform AV Unity Fund at [avunityfund@auroville.org.in](mailto:avunityfund@auroville.org.in) with a copy to [avagoffice@auroville.org.in](mailto:avagoffice@auroville.org.in) :  
Auroville Unity Fund, Town Hall, Auroville 605101 Tamil Nadu, India



## Via the Auroville International (AVI) center where you are a taxpayer:

TAX EXEMPTIONS ARE POSSIBLE IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES

In all cases, please specify

"DONATION FOR AUROVILLE VILLAGE ACTION GROUP" request your tax receipt

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#### Deutschland

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#### United Kingdom

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#### USA

<https://aviusa.org/donate1/>  
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AVI-USA can accept donations in any currency via credit card, PayPal, or Google Pay (no wire transfer fees)

For all other centers, please see

[www.auroville-international.org](http://www.auroville-international.org)  
[info@auroville-international.org](mailto:info@auroville-international.org)

### We thank you!

Our Web page: <https://villageaction.in/>

Contact: [avagoffice@auroville.org.in](mailto:avagoffice@auroville.org.in) Cell No.: (91) 94437 02387

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