

AUROVILLE PROJECT COORDINATION GROUP

Project Report Format

1. Name of the project: “Restoring Connection” FilmFest

2. Name of the project holder(s):

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3. Amount received in rupees from SDZ: Rs.50,000

4. Year in which grant received: 2016

5. Amount(s) received from other donors:

Rs.23,800 from SAIER

Rs.2,500 anonymous donation

Plus in-kind from SAIER:

-use of samera tent

*-accommodation at Mitra Youth Hostel (*event was cancelled, see below)*

*-use of SAIER Conference hall (*event was cancelled, see below)*

6. Please describe the activities of the project and the final outcome, or outcome so far if project has not been completed.

We hosted a 6-day Film Festival on the theme of “Restoring Connection” (from October 17th to 22nd) as part of our larger Restorative Circles project in Auroville, where we are working to raise awareness about Restorative Justice and hopefully contribute to building a justice system that is in alignment with our Auroville values. With the FilmFest, our hope was to offer yet another approach and medium through which to explore the subject, as we want to touch and engage with as many Aurovilians as possible, and not everybody will choose to come to our workshops or attend a live Restorative Circle.

We selected 13 documentaries and feature films about Restorative Justice from around the world, based on true stories of pain and loss of connection. The films showcased different examples of how people involved in or impacted by conflict choose to respond – in ways that honoured healing and reconciliation over hatred and punishment. After each film, we offered a facilitated dialogue space. We had a tent outside the cinema hall, with a circle of chairs and cushions, and we welcomed our viewers to share about their movie experience – what touched them, what challenged them, and how they might connect elements from the movie to Auroville.

The overall feedback and response to our FilmFest was positive. Our viewers were touched and inspired on many levels – they appreciated the depth of the movies and the selections made. They found value in the subject matter, and appreciated that we offered movies as a medium of exploration. Also, many said that they absolutely loved our dialogue spaces, as it offered them a space to process and digest their experience, as well as to connect and share with other Aurovilians.

Many expressed how much they miss dialogue (and circles and connection and sharing) in Auroville.

“I feel confused in Auroville. What is spiritual, what is psychological, what is uplifting? This circle space opens it all up. So many of us old Aurovilians have stored so much pain and so many stories. And even though Auroville is being threatened and under pressure from the outside world, the most beautiful things emerge from within – like this FilmFest.” [Participant’s quote]

It was special for us as a team to receive support from friends in hosting these dialogue spaces. For example, Bridget (who is Irish) facilitated the dialogue after the Irish movie “Five Minutes of Heaven,” Niva (who is Israeli) the Israeli movie “One Day After Peace,” and Neil (who is South African) the South African movie “On the Path to Forgiveness.” This certainly added an additional flavour to our dialogue spaces!

In addition to people’s personal sharings about conflict and healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, two common themes emerged over the week: (i) how many long-standing and unresolved conflicts we have in Auroville and discouragement that we are not better equipped to handle these situations more constructively, both on an individual and a collective level, and (ii) our lack of connection and exchange with the surrounding villages and real concern about the impact this attitude could have on our shared future if we do not start to make more concrete steps in this direction. People expressed a longing that as a community we would really learn to love, to forgive, to share, and to overcome our conditioned ideas of superiority versus inferiority.

“Forgiving means taking a step towards yourself. If we’re afraid, we cannot be ourselves. Fear just makes us close down.” [Participant’s quote]

“The power of naming something contributes to healing – giving it a voice, being heard and hearing others. Listen carefully and act slowly.” [Participant’s quote]

We were touched by how many people attended the movies and dialogue spaces, and at the same time we would have enjoyed an even larger attendance. Most screenings attracted between 60-100 people (a full house being 127 seats), although some (especially the matinee screenings) were lower in numbers. Several people returned over the week, so it was hard to count exactly how many Aurovilians attended in total, however we estimate at about 150.

Hosting this event involved a lot of coordination, and we are grateful for all the support we received – from the technical side like testing the movies, to on-site arrangements like setting up the tent and chairs and lights, to being able to use the City Centre Canteen and providing refreshments, and more.

We had one big disappointment. We had originally planned to open our FilmFest with “Women for Justice,” a documentary about a grassroots movement in women’s justice in Gujarat, and Nimisha Desai, who runs this NGO, was to be present and host a Question & Answer session after the movie, as well as offer some workshops for women and youth from the bioregion (in collaboration with Auroville Village Action). But at the last minute, we were encouraged to cancel this screening due to expected violence on the roads connected to the local panchayat elections. And then our next rescheduled dates happened to clash with India’s sudden demonitization plan, which seriously impacted Nimisha’s NGO, and she needed to stay back to sort out their financial challenges.

We were so much looking forward to having a movie about India be a part of our program, and we had arranged for the text of the movie to be translated into Tamil, so that we could offer simultaneous live translation during the screening, so that Tamil-speakers from the bioregion could also be inspired by Nimisha's work. We want to put this program on again, later in 2017, if we are able to coordinate dates between our team, Nimisha, and Auroville Village Action.

*SAIHER offered us in-kind use of their Conference Hall for this movie, plus accommodation at Mitra Youth Hostel for Nimisha. We hope to avail of this same offer when we reschedule. And unfortunately, we lost quite some money with booking and then cancelling Nimisha's tickets twice, and we only received partial refunds. Also, we lost the cost of a one-way Chennai airport taxi pick-up, as we were too late in informing the taxi company.

For the future, we may continue to share films on the theme of Restorative Justice, possibly on a monthly basis or so, as our hope is to continue to raise community awareness and because people appreciated this format.

We are attaching:

1. A PDF of our FilmFest pamphlet
2. A small photo gallery by Outreach Media volunteer, Marco
3. A photo of an article by Auroville Today
4. Feedback forms from our viewers

7. Please provide a Financial Statement by filling in the table below. Rows may be added or deleted.

We received additional donations from friends (a total of Rs.68,000), which we have not accounted for in this budget table. We will either carry over this money for our next event with Nimisha, or use it for a future Restorative Circles project.

DONATIONS RECEIVED

PCG - SDZ	₹ 50,000.00
SAIHER*	₹ 23,800.00
Anonymous <i>(plus in-kind support from SAIHER)</i>	₹ 2,500.00

Total Received	₹ 76,300.00
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EXPENSES

Airfare for Nimisha	tickets (and cancellations)	₹ 14,504.00
Taxis for Nimisha	Chennai pick-up	₹ 2,350.00
Transport	tent pick-up	₹ 800.00

Honorarium	preparation for simultaneous translation	₹ 5,000.00
Cinema Rental	MMC for 1 week	₹ 12,600.00
Event Manager	Iyyappan	₹ 10,000.00
Canteen Staff	2 ammas for 1 week	₹ 2,400.00
Film Screening Fee (<i>to be paid when we reschedule</i>)	for "Women for Justice"	₹ 11,000.00
Graphics and Prints	logo design	₹ 1,500.00
	flyer design	₹ 1,553.00
	pamphlet graphics	₹ 1,050.00
	flex poster	₹ 1,250.00
	prints and copies	₹ 5,360.00
		₹ 10,713.00
Supplies		₹ 355.00
Chairs rental		₹ 5,480.00
Total Spent		₹ 75,202.00

BALANCE AMOUNT	₹ 1098.00
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*Please note that SAIER's donation was given for specific costs:

- Airfare for Nimisha: Rs.10,000
- Chennai airport pick and drop: Rs.4,800
- Honorarium: Rs.5,000
- Food: Rs.4,000