

AUROVILLE PROJECT COORDINATION GROUP

Project Report Format

1. Name of the project:

Applied Research: Restorative Circles in Auroville

2. Name of the project holder(s):

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3. Amount received in rupees from SDZ:

Rs. 1,73,469

4. Year in which grant received:

2016 (January)

5. Amount(s) received from other donors:

n/a

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

Year-End Report: January – December 2016
(or more realistically September 2015 – March 2017)

After 5 years working on and off with Restorative Circles (RC), we finally took the leap of bringing this process to the community at large, wanting to raise awareness about the need for a justice system in Auroville, and working to co-create a response to conflict that is based on restoring trust, connection and communication.

In developing and dreaming up this project 1.5 years ago, we were clear that our vision was huge and that although we were submitting a proposal for 1 year, we were actually committing to a journey that would last much longer and that would eventually take on a life of its own. Because this project and how it unfolds depends so very much on the community, we had no way to predict where we would be in 1 year (or 1.5 years), or where the community would be – that is, in relationship to conflict and its inevitability, justice and our need for it, and the practice of RC as a potential personal and collective response. Yet, our sense is that we are exactly where we need to be – the process has clearly taken root in Auroville, and given the nature of this work, we still likely have many years ahead of us before we can as a community truly embody the full potential of Restorative Circles as a way of holding space for transformative dialogue. So here is to our continued engagement and stewardship!

We have hosted 15 live Circles over the past year, and a total of approximately 300 Aurovilians were named and invited to participate. Even though RC is voluntary (so not everyone who is named chooses to engage), the process is becoming more and more known, and valued, in the community. The Circles were called in response to conflict and challenges in personal relationships, and neighbourhood relationships; communication and its impact between residents and Working Groups; communication and the need for clarity within particular Working Groups,

and within particular schools, and projects and project teams; disagreements between Working Groups and community members regarding principles for participatory town planning; and deep yet often hidden cross-cultural misunderstandings and biases.

We have experienced almost every Circle to be deeply powerful and touching. There is a magical, and often unexpected, beauty that emerges, and the dialogue offers the participants insight, healing, connection, and most of the time creative steps for forward movement. And probably one of the most empowering aspects of RC is that we can access this space independently of who comes and how many come. The Circle’s principles hold conflict transformation as a collective and systemic process, instead of solely a personal one, so the ability to move forward is within the hands and hearts of those present, even if “the really important people” choose not to come. Many of our Circles have proven this to be true, with supposed key players choosing not to engage and yet the outcomes are surprisingly healing.

This said, we are also very clear that one of our biggest growing edges and next steps is to engage more actively with the Working Groups. Many Working Groups members have been named for different Circles, and on average very few of them respond with a “yes” to taking part in the process. So we hope to find ways of exploring this phenomenon together, and understanding how we can offer reassurance and create trust that Circles can actually contribute to forward movement, and that they are not “just another meeting and waste of time.” We imagine that it will likely take 5-10 years before Circles are really powerful and successful in Auroville – and where we might even be able to use the RC format as a way forward in our collective decision making.

As a team, we are thoroughly enjoying ourselves! Being able to engage with the community in this way feels very real and alive, and we are integrating new learning almost every day and with every new experience.

We received a budget for a 1-year Auroville Maintenance for L’aura, which allowed her to commit her time and energy fully towards this work. This year is now over, and it is a challenge to not have a budget for our project. In the ideal, we would like to have a long-term budget for 1-2 Aurovilian Maintenances, and funding for our community-wide activities, and other running expenses. This would allow us to engage even more fully, and to offer more of our time and energy to further developing RC in Auroville.

This report is a reflection of just one aspect of our work over the past 1.5 years, and in theory we could share about so much more. To have another glimpse into our journey this year, please refer to our 6-month report, as well as our reports about our Cross-Cultural Restorative Dialogue and our Restoring Connection Film Fest.

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

	Amount INR		
Amount of grant received from Stichting De Zaaier	Rs. 1,73,469		
List of expenditures by category			
L’aura’s monthly Auroville Maintenance (for just under 1 year)	Rs.16,230 per month (for just under 1 year)		

Total			
Grand Total	Rs. 1,73,469		