

ANNUAL
REPORT

APRIL 2020 / MARCH 2021

AVAG

AUROVILLE VILLAGE ACTION GROUP





WHO WE ARE

Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) is a unit under Auroville Village Action Trust (AVAT). We are committed to grassroots and integrated community development for rural villages in the Auroville bioregion. Founded in 1983, we work with 35 panchayats and 75 settlements in Vanur block, Villupuram district.

We work directly with more than 5,200 women in over 300 women's groups, and 1,000 men in sports associations and men's groups, as well as with the elected and traditional leaders of the communities, Paalam youth members and the government school teachers. We also work closely with various government departments at the panchayat, block, and district levels. This extensive network makes it possible for us to initiate sustainable grass root development projects.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS



Dear Readers,

Due to the spread of the pandemic to most parts of the world, the year 2020-2021 was an unusual period for everyone which not only slowed down or stopped the speed of our actions, but also left us to contemplate and introspect the same. It was a period of fear and uncertainty that demanded a higher level of unity, solidarity, and concern for each other. Though the pandemic has widened the gap between the rich and the poor beyond proportion, it was also heartening to witness many people coming forward to help and care for the neediest.



The pandemic has toppled and shattered the dreams of many and it will take a while for the most vulnerable people to come back to normalcy. There was an urgency to support the communities with the correct information on the disease and to follow the pandemic guidelines, assisting the neediest with basic essentials to give hope for life .

At AVAG, we were busy with education, prevention, and relief initiatives and we also contemplated on the way forward. Our strategy was not for charity, but to facilitate a participatory response system in which everyone can take part. We nurtured the atmosphere of accountability, transparency, and collective decision-making in the communities. In short, the crisis was made into a learning experience. We actuated collaborative actions with people from all sections of the villages and the government. Thanks to all our donors, friends, and well-wishers, our pandemic response initiative was able to support 16000 families in different forms.



People appreciate and value the support and assistance offered by us at this critical time. We have also started to link the artisans and construction workers with the relevant government departments to access the benefits. We continue to offer financial support in form of low interest loans to the women's groups through the Udhayam Women's Federation and link them with the nationalised banks.

The World Dignity. Inc generously offered scholarships for the higher education of the neediest families and our AVVAI revolving fund scheme continues to support financial assistance for the education of girls.

In human solidarity
Anbu & Moris

- Some time you win and some time you learn. . . Year 2020-21 was the year of learning for all of usit has given scope to refine our approach
- The outbreak of COVID has thrown an unprecedented challenge to the nation and its citizens. It demands us to stand together and fight the challenge
- 2020-21 was the most challenging year yet for all of us As the pandemic threatens to severely set back economic, social, and development gains all over the world reverse progress on poverty reduction, and throw economies into recession.



WHERE WE WORK

We are functioning in Vanur block of the Villupuram district, which is one of the most backwards districts in Tamil Nadu as per the State Human Development Report. This is one of the bottom five districts of Tamil Nadu.



★ Villupuram district

AVAG & AUROVILLE

We are one of the principal working groups and a bridge between Auroville and its bio-region. We foster participatory village transformation and co-development to collaboratively manifest sustainable and integral community development in a spirit of harmony.

What makes AVAG unique?

We are Empowering Rural women to strengthen their role in the society by gaining the dignity and self-esteem for themselves and their families through financial inclusion.





AUROVILLE

Auroville is an international township near Puducherry on the Coromandel Coast in India. Founded in 1968, Auroville is based on the vision of The Mother from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and is a unique project rooted in the values of human unity with respect for cultural diversity, endorsed by UNESCO and the Government of India. Spread over more than 4000 acres, it is an inspiring model for ecologically-responsible living and sustainable development.

Rural development has been a major activity of Auroville since its inception. There are 13 villages in the immediate neighbourhood, comprising about 40,000 people, and altogether 40 villages in the bioregional area. At present, ten Auroville working groups have dedicated themselves to fostering sustainable programmes in these 40 villages.

WHAT WE DO

We envision the realisation of a future that is equally inclusive of all sections of society, culturally rich, economically and ecologically sustainable. The idea is to collaborate with rural communities to reveal their innate wisdom and ability to collectively determine and manifest their fullest potential. Our emphasis is neither on charity nor on service, but co-development with residents of the Bioregion to cultivate the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to build a better future for all.

We foster participatory village transformation through: **Community development, Economic development, Capacity building and Psychosocial support.**

Our need-based, not project-based programs are shaped by input from the communities. Besides leaders and teachers in our working area, leaders of the Women's and Men's Federations and socially engaged youth actively shape and influence our actions.



Community

This program is built on the values of **Unity, Equality and Wellbeing**. It strives to foster an atmosphere of community, solidarity and ownership among the people through various interventions. 6,000 women and men, members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), are provided with opportunities like learning sessions, skill training and awareness camps.

This year our overall community development programs mainly focused on COVID relief work.

We have initiated two participatory pandemic response initiatives with the support of community-based organisations in the villages and government departments, benefiting 100,000 people in 75 settlements to reduce the spread and the detrimental impacts of the pandemic.

Development



Empowerment

Awareness Camps

Covid Relief Work

Health Camps

INITIATIVES

We have taken up the action to support the workers of informal sectors, as most of the artisans and construction workers in our area were not able to access the benefits announced by the government during the pandemic.

Our organisation has just started to work with the millet cultivators of our area and is establishing linkages with government and non-government organizations that support farmers in production, marketing and value addition.

Awareness trainings were given to around 200 SHG leaders, PAALAM and Village leaders on preventive measures and Pre and post Covid care.

**Support to Migrant
Workers and Artisans**

**Cooperation with the
Government in Community
Health and development
Sector**

Farmers' Empowerment

OUR COVID RESPONSES

Our efforts have been concentrated on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable people. We managed to assist the community with food essentials worth up to **Rs.1000/-** to **around 9000 families** of the migrants, aged, single women, and to the families in the containment zones as well.

The prevention and education campaign has benefited **16000 families** by distributing educational flyers and two doses of homoeopathic immune booster.

Around **50000 masks** were given out to the people in the villages around Auroville and to the SHGs members. We also credited Rs.500 to the poorest of the poor in the women SHGs.

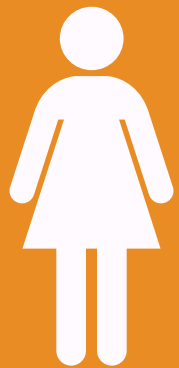




200 womenSHG, Men SHG, Palam and Local Village Leaders participated in
3 Covid Care and Awareness training Meetings



9000 Families of the migrants, aged, single women, and from the
containment zones assisted with food essentials.



16000 people benefited by two doses of homoeopathic immune booster



50000 Masks distributed among the villagers in the bioregion

3 Eye camps benefited **445** people from 3 villages

400

migrant workers and artists helped to connect with the government schemes



227 Millet farmers supported for establishing linkages with government and
NGOs that support in production, marketing and value addition.

A SMALL STEP FORWARD CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MANY..

The success of our COVID relief initiatives is in large part attributable to the collaborative effort between the street level task forces, consisting of village leaders, women's federation, PALAAM youths, ABSCA - members of sports associations, Auroville units, schools, the police and other governmental departments. These initiatives were also fostering unity and harmony within the communities, by bringing together different caste groups for the village meetings, as in almost all settlements, men, women, youth leaders, and government representatives worked together to control the spread of the pandemic



"Our Covid relief support has protected and saved the lives of Covid-affected members of the communities in the bioregion of Auroville."



SUPPORT TO MIGRANT WORKERS AND MARGINAL FARMERS

We could approach to the migrants' community which are the most vulnerable to the pandemic crisis. Most of the artisans and construction workers in our area were not able to access the benefits announced by the government during the pandemic as they were not registered under the relevant department. After we have taken up the initiative to link the artisans with the government, they were able to access most of the Covid relief services.



**We have reached out the
unreachable**

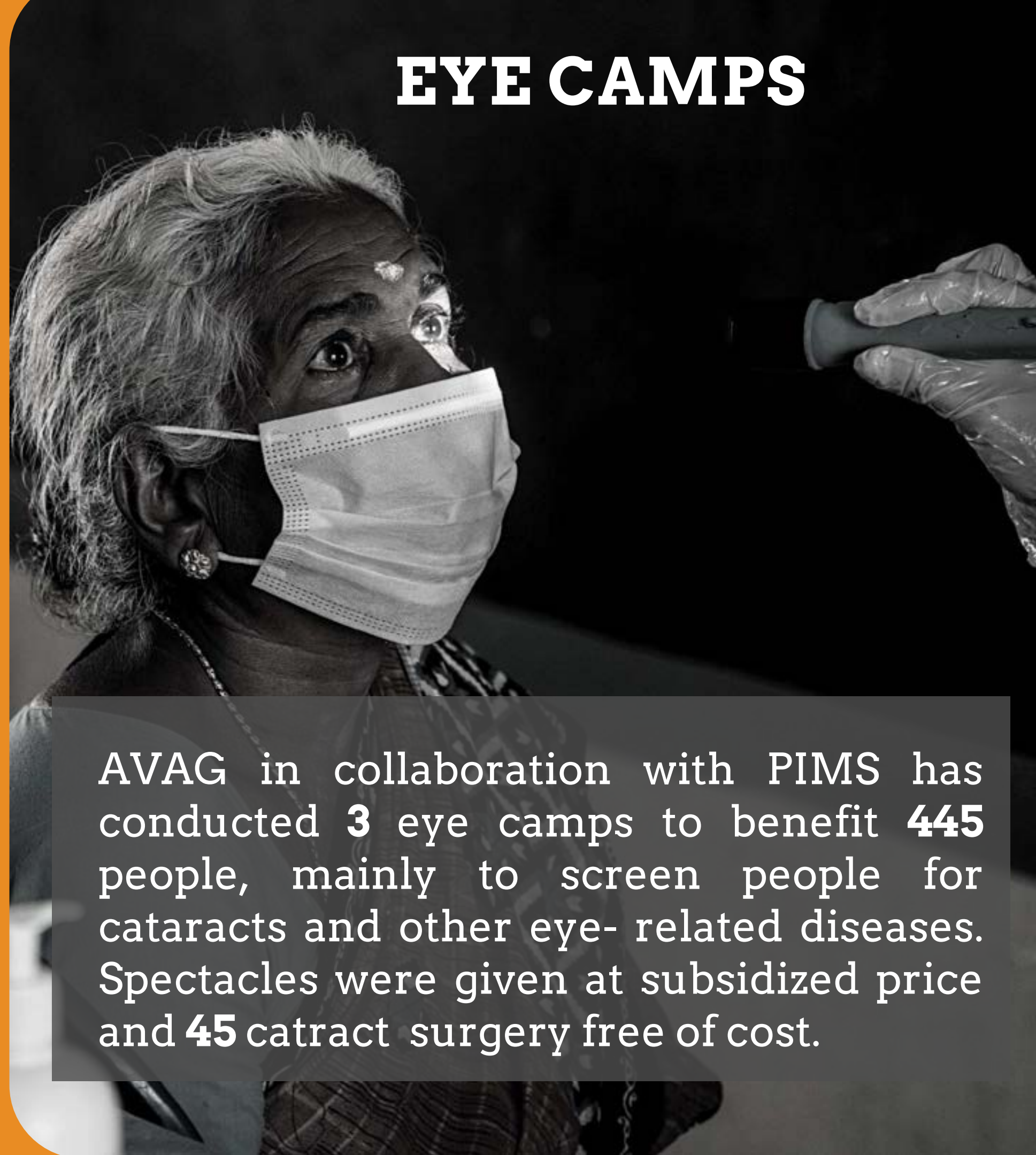


HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARENESS



COVID Health & safety awareness camps were organized for the villages leaders, SHGs and PALAM members with the support of the police. We conducted awareness trainings for around 200 SHG leaders, PALAM and Village leaders on Preventive measures, Pre and post Covid Care in the villages of Auroville's Bioregion. Through these 200 leaders more than 20000 villagers got informed about the COVID facts, prevention and safety measures.

EYE CAMPS



AVAG in collaboration with PIMS has conducted **3** eye camps to benefit **445** people, mainly to screen people for cataracts and other eye-related diseases. Spectacles were given at subsidized price and **45** cataract surgery free of cost.

Capacity Building

This program aims to cultivate knowledge and confidence, expand social awareness, enhance local leadership in the communities and to nurture each individual's capacity for self-empowerment and skill development to build a better future for all.

The beneficiaries participate in a series of seminars, workshops, trainings and meetings that are geared to equip the communities with the right tools to bring about the change they wish to see within themselves, their villages and society as a whole. We link the people with the government schemes and programs.

Our goal is to motivate local women to experiment and give them the platform to collaborate, occasionally may fail, but encourage them to raise their hands for the upliftment of themselves as individuals and for the society as a whole

Capacity building through Linking with the Government

The organisation links the rural people with the government schemes and programs. In cooperation with the district disaster management team, we selected volunteers from the bio-region to be trained in **first aid and disaster management** to be able to play a role in our region at times of disaster. Similarly, volunteers were selected to undertake a survey to support the National Leprosy Eradication Program.

We also collaborated with the district social welfare board and the police department in organizing awareness cum training program on child abuse and violence against women.





Support to women SHGs

During the lockdown period, our staff visited the villages regularly to counsel the women SHGs and to monitor the progress of their performance. This clearly helped to understand the government protocols, access benefits from the government and to get the correct information.

Internal Complaints Committee meeting (ICC)

Prevention - Prohibition - Redressal

This year we formed and set up an ICC on dealing with sexual harassment of women at the work place. Our staff members got informed about the 'Vishaka Act' of India, an act on prohibition of Sexual harassment, promulgated by the Indian Supreme Court in 1997 and superseded in 2013 by the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2013. Currently more than 30 members joined this committee.

UDHAYAM WOMEN'S FEDERATION



Is a body that represents the voices of the women in all the SHGs. They support the organization in making decisions related to the programs in the villages, more so for women. The federation also supports our organization in the effective execution and monitoring of the activities for women and the AVVAI revolving fund scheme.

3 meetings of UWF held throughout the year and participated by 56 members

We organize regular, yearly meetings and trainings for the leaders of the women's federation on topics like the Panchayat Raj Act, domestic violence against women and child sexual abuse.

To help the members of the women's federation to overcome the economic burden caused by the pandemic, we linked 2750 women in the SHGs with the nationalized banks to get loans worth Rs.2.2 crore. Over all, women in the SHGs have taken loans worth around 11 crores using all sources of lending - internal and external in this year.

Psychosocial Services

The aim of this program is to provide emotional and mental support, as well as to enhance the spiritual and physical health and wellbeing of each individual and the community. Furthermore, we are providing training to the community members in counseling, de-addiction and other specific therapies, as well as facilitation between practitioners and clients.

Healing sessions are offered to the traumatized families of alcoholics and alcoholics are linked to de-addiction centres for treatment and rehabilitation

Auroville's bioregion was hit hard by the pandemic triggering a socio-economic crisis and exacerbating the inequalities and vulnerability of women and children in our working area. Most of the villagers are daily wage workers, farm laborer, so they were under tremendous stress of loss of job and unable in providing even basic food and other necessities to their family members. To prevent them from psychosocial depression emerged out of the crisis, AVAG has given the assurance to assist the community people both in the form material and spiritual way, which have been led to great psychosocial support to the overall community.

Psychosocial Support along with financial inclusion to go smoothly through pandemic affected economical crisis

Our Covid relief support in form of marginal loan has supported 1300 families. It has protected and saved the lives of Covid-affected members of the communities in the bioregion area of Auroville.

We supported 460 women with loan repayment facilities whose family had been caught up in the repayment chain of local money lenders, providing loans with very heavy interest rates and therefore exploiting them by taking the benefit of emergency and critical situations of needy families. Our support with the repayment of the loans has given a great psychosocial assistance to them, along with socioeconomic help. It also minimized the dominance of such malpractices in the rural communities.

Economic Development

This program aims at financial inclusion and fair practices to increase economic opportunities and to strengthen the livelihood base of the communities through a sustainable approach of revolving funds and savings programs, as well as by providing access to flexible, ethical and people friendly financial institutions. A loan and repayment scheme provides thousands of people with an opportunity to access financial means.

Financial Inclusion

Udhayam Insurance scheme

**Udhayam Federation - Loan
decision committee meeting**

Revolving Fund

AVVAI Fund for Education

Social Enterprise



WSHG's internal savings came to **Rs.79083000**



3835 women helped to receive loans worth **Rs.100263000**



Rs.56260000 issued to **1438** women through
internal lending



509 women borrowed **Rs.19990000** from **AVAG Revolving Fund**



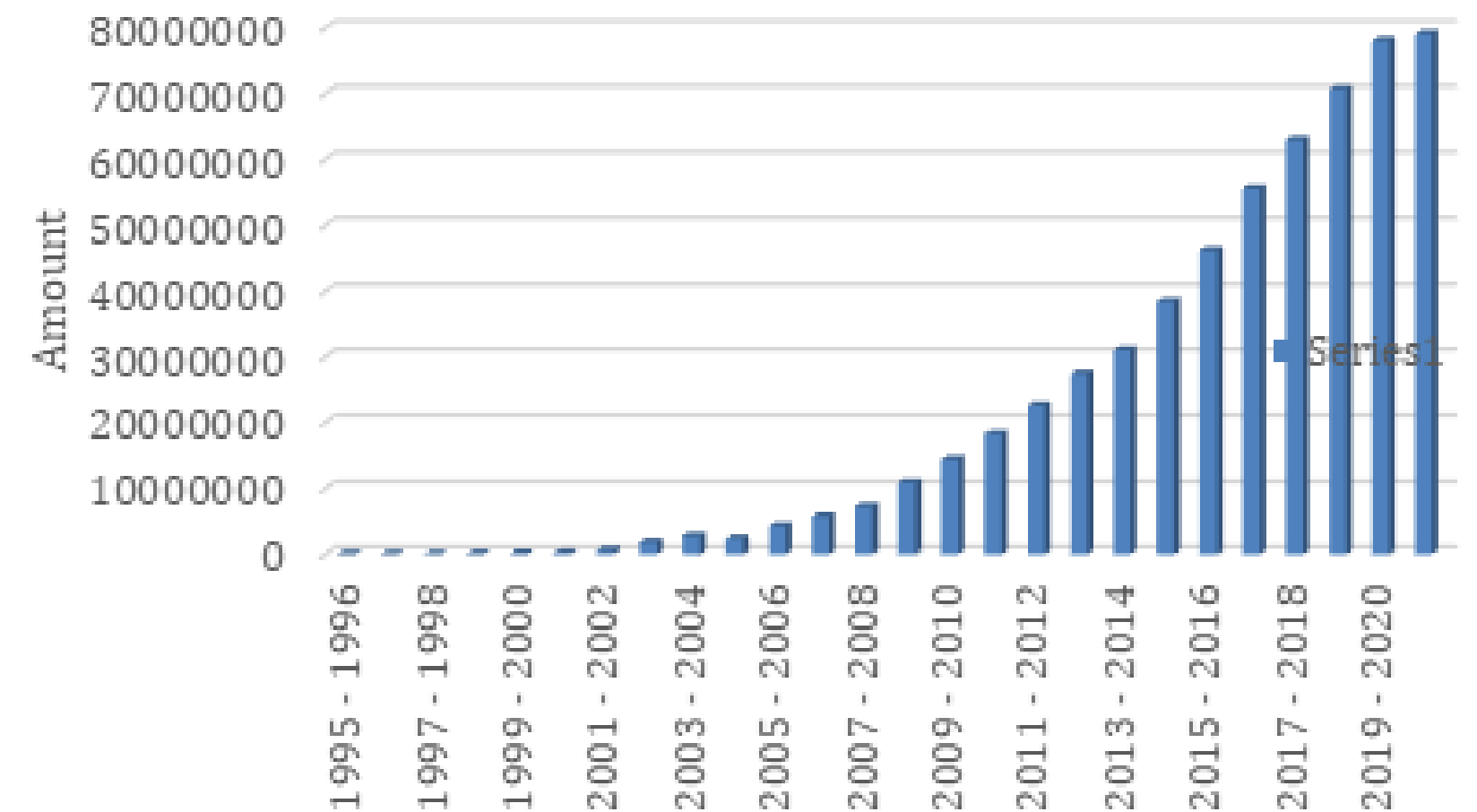
Loan for Children's Education **Rs.18394000** to **561** women



Rs.22599000 issued to **565** women to improve
housing

Udhayam Insurance scheme 4580 total members

AVAG SAVINGS PROGRESS CHART



Nothing is impossible if you are up for the challenge.....Accomplishment beyond the challenges.....We have shown the progress in challenges of pandemic



FINANCIAL INCLUSION - FUND FOR EDUCATION

AVVAI: Access to education is a sustainable model revolving fund that aims to support underprivileged students from rural communities in our working area to pursue education, which would otherwise be out of their financial reach or too burdensome for the marginalized families.

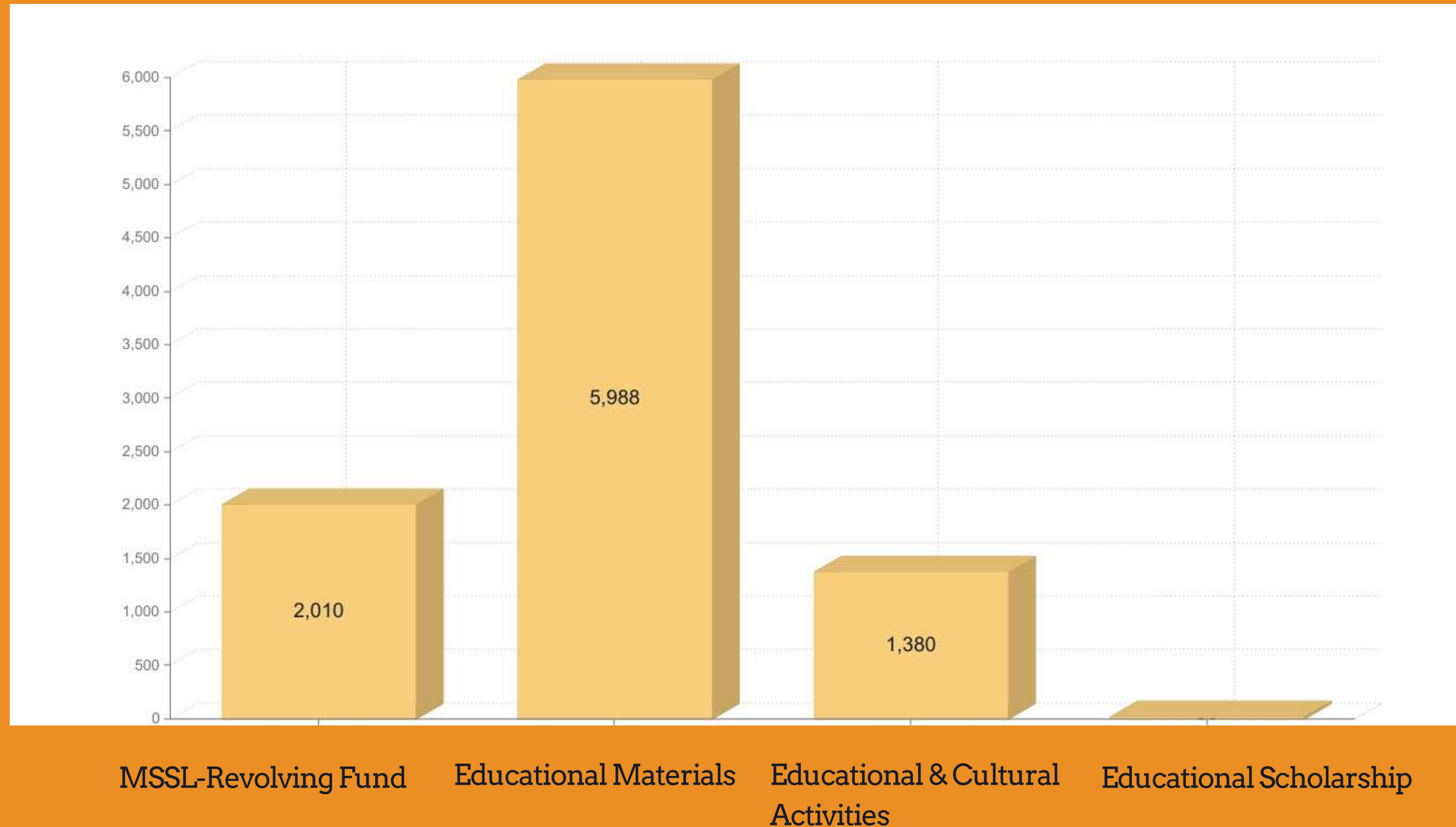


AVVAI Project started in 2015 with a two crore CSR grant from MSSL Motherson Sumi Systems Limited as a sustainable model of financial inclusion and continues to allocate funds to low income families to cover the expanding demand of affordable, easily accessible loans for girls' education. The loan and repayment scheme ensures a continuous opportunity to support future generations of girls in need, while the interest received from the repayments, funds supplementary education programs.

This revolving fund program is managed in collaboration with the Udhyam Women's Federation

This programme has initiated a shift in the social normative of preferential treatment towards girls.

NUMBER OF GIRLS IMPACTED



Our measurable impact with the financial inclusion

We have assisted the BPL families by supporting them with total **102** loans for fulfilling medical assistance and emergency hospitalization needs of their family members. This support could save the lives of rural poor with health complications, improved the reproductive health of women, saved and improved the health of the children who were severely affected by malnutrition, pneumonia, dengue, etc.



We are implementing a vigorous program of empowering rural women to reach their full potential and regain their dignity by the financial inclusion initiatives.

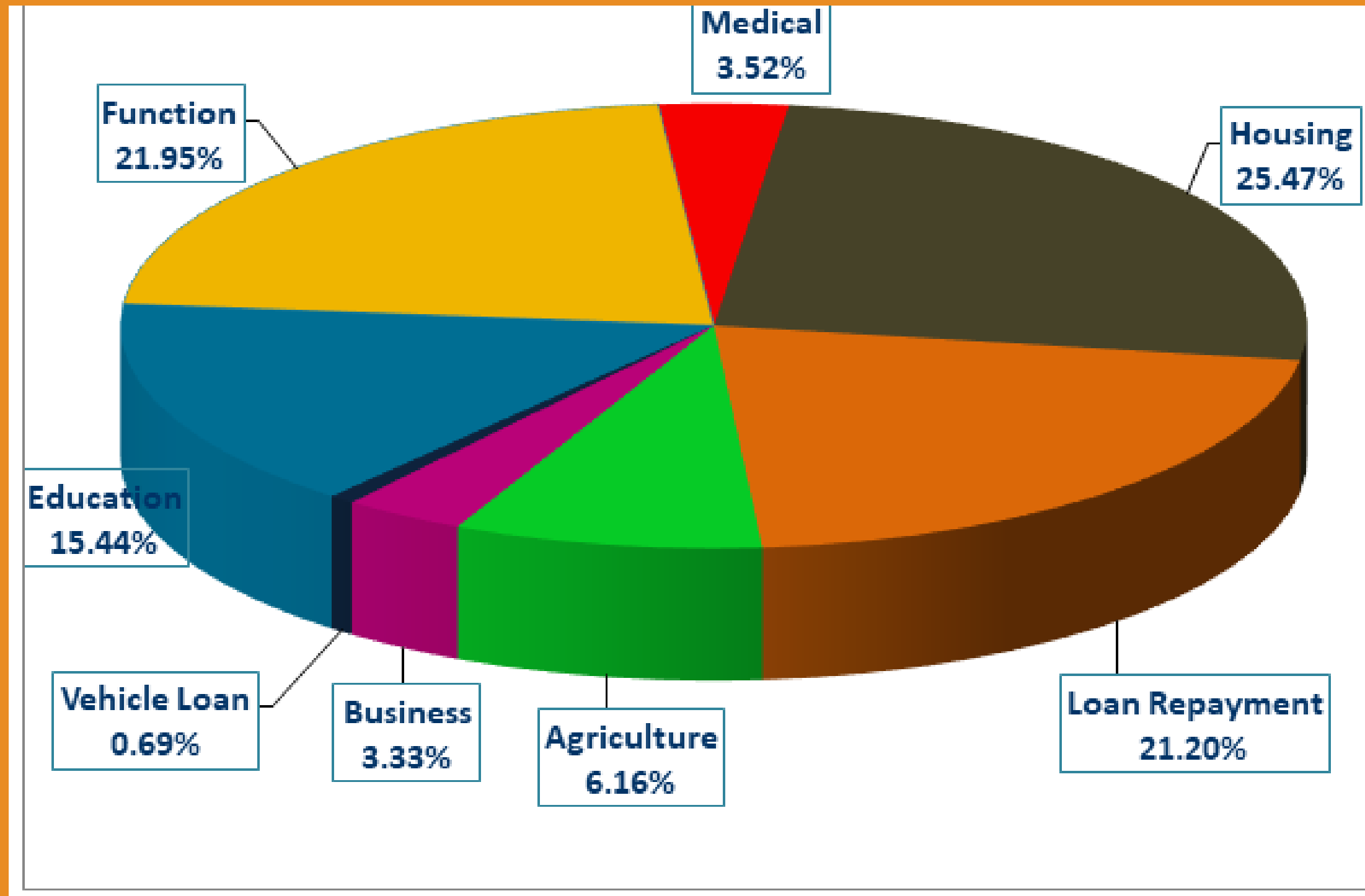


We helped **565** households deriving from poorest of poor in our working area. It has improved their house conditions and made their living settlement more safe, strong and happier place by staying stable throughout the various weather conditions.

We supported **90** women for improving their existing self-micro business and also promoted women who have a talent to start their micro business and achieve the self-reliance and gain the dignity

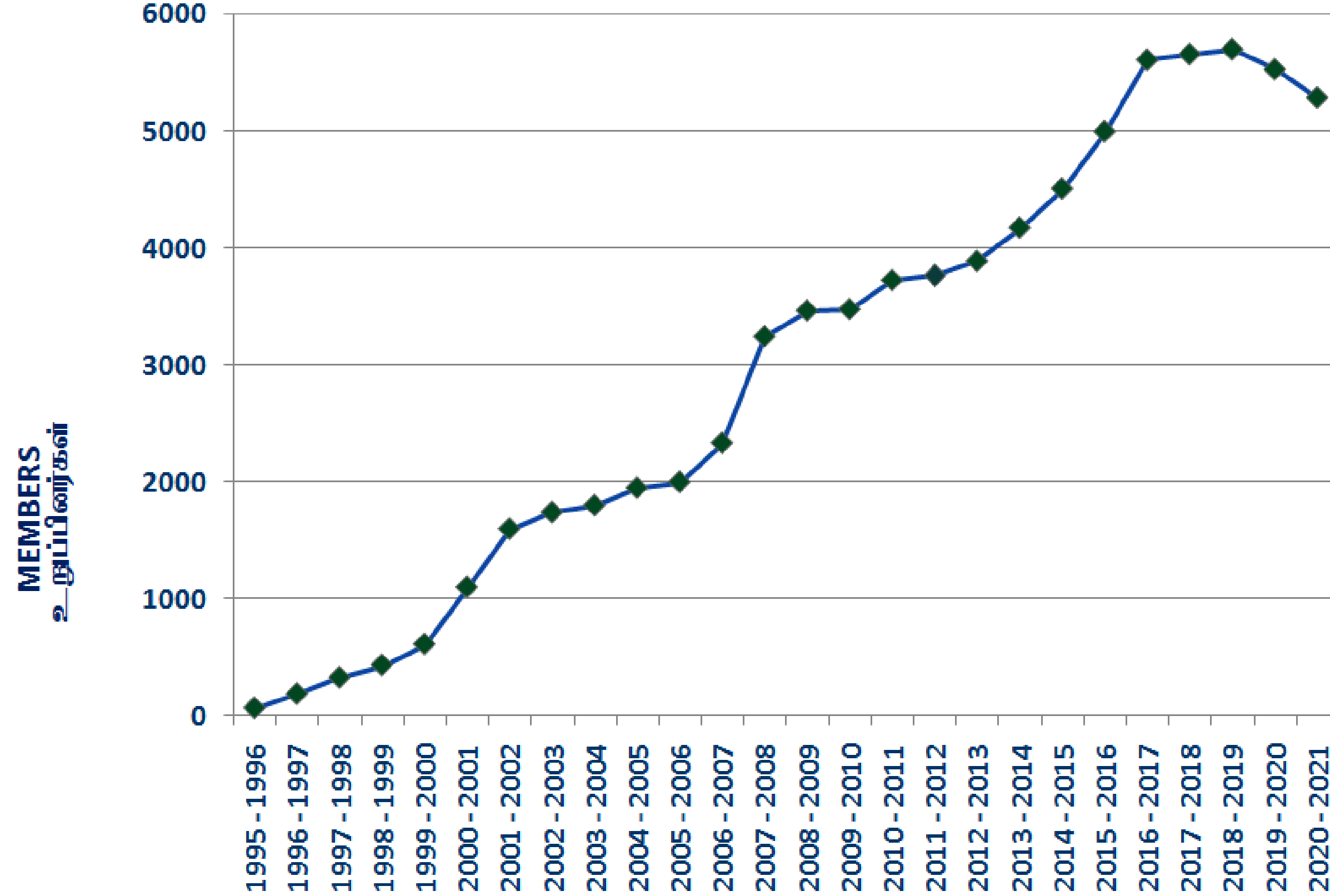
We distributed a need-based loan to **227** marginal farmers for either to sustain their crop or improve their livelihoods based on farming

Financial Inclusion of AVAG Women SHGs 2020-2021



PROGRESS CHART OF MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S SHGs

ஆண்டு வாரியான மகளிர் மன்றங்களின் உறுப்பினர் எண்ணிக்கை விபரம்



GET INVOLVED

Become a Volunteer

Volunteers can help in countless ways from funding support to design & film making. Please email us directly if you would like to join our team as a volunteer. We encourage minimum volunteer periods of 3 months.



Become a friend

A friend can give support in many ways; You can wish us well and follow our progress through reading our newsletters and sharing your reflections. Financial contributions are always welcome, please visit our [Donate](#) page to know more about modes of contribution.

Become a Partner

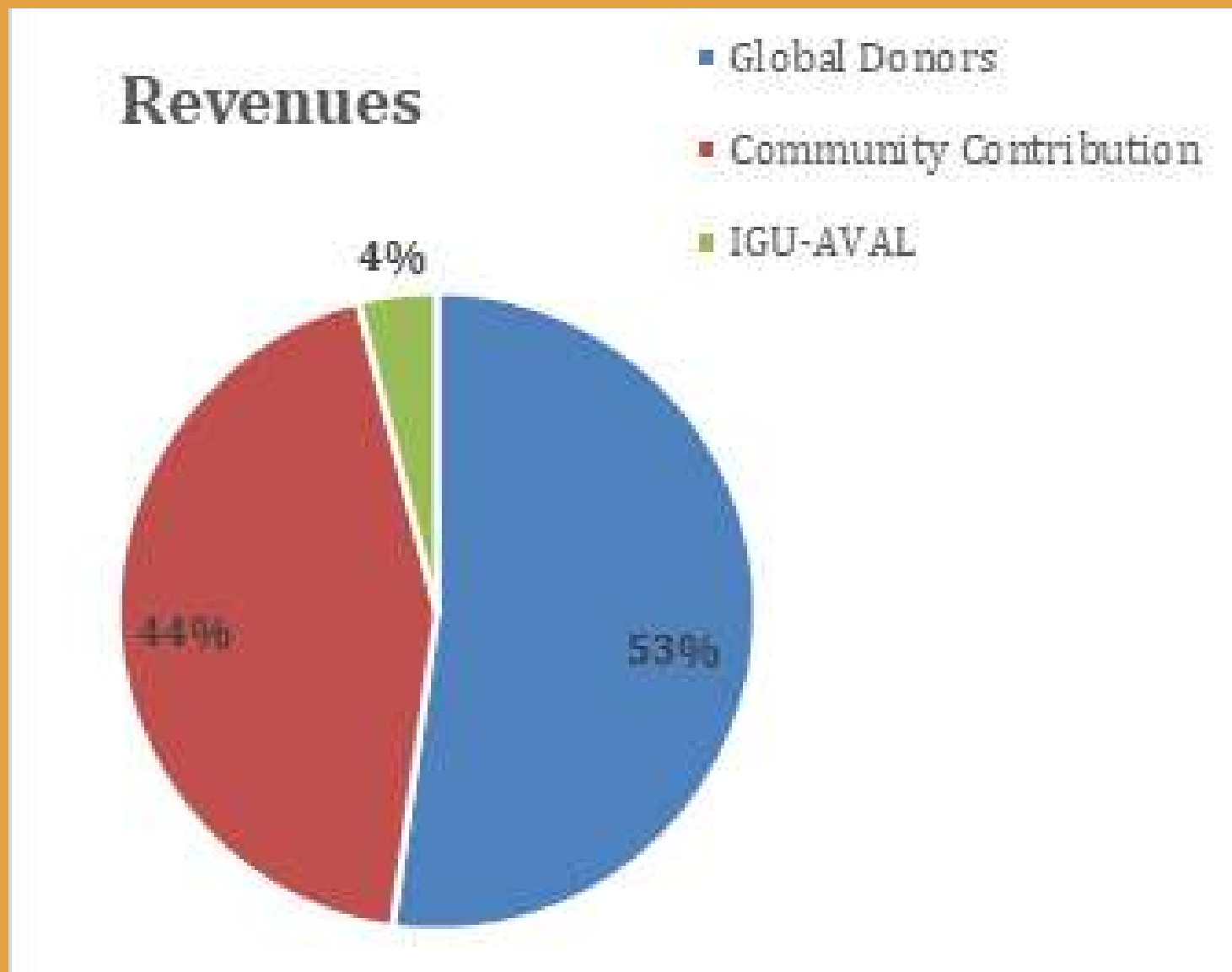
As a Partner you'll be the one presenting AVAG or AVAL in your community, city or country, whether in the form of projects or products. We aim to spread our vision and to co-create to create a better world for all of us.



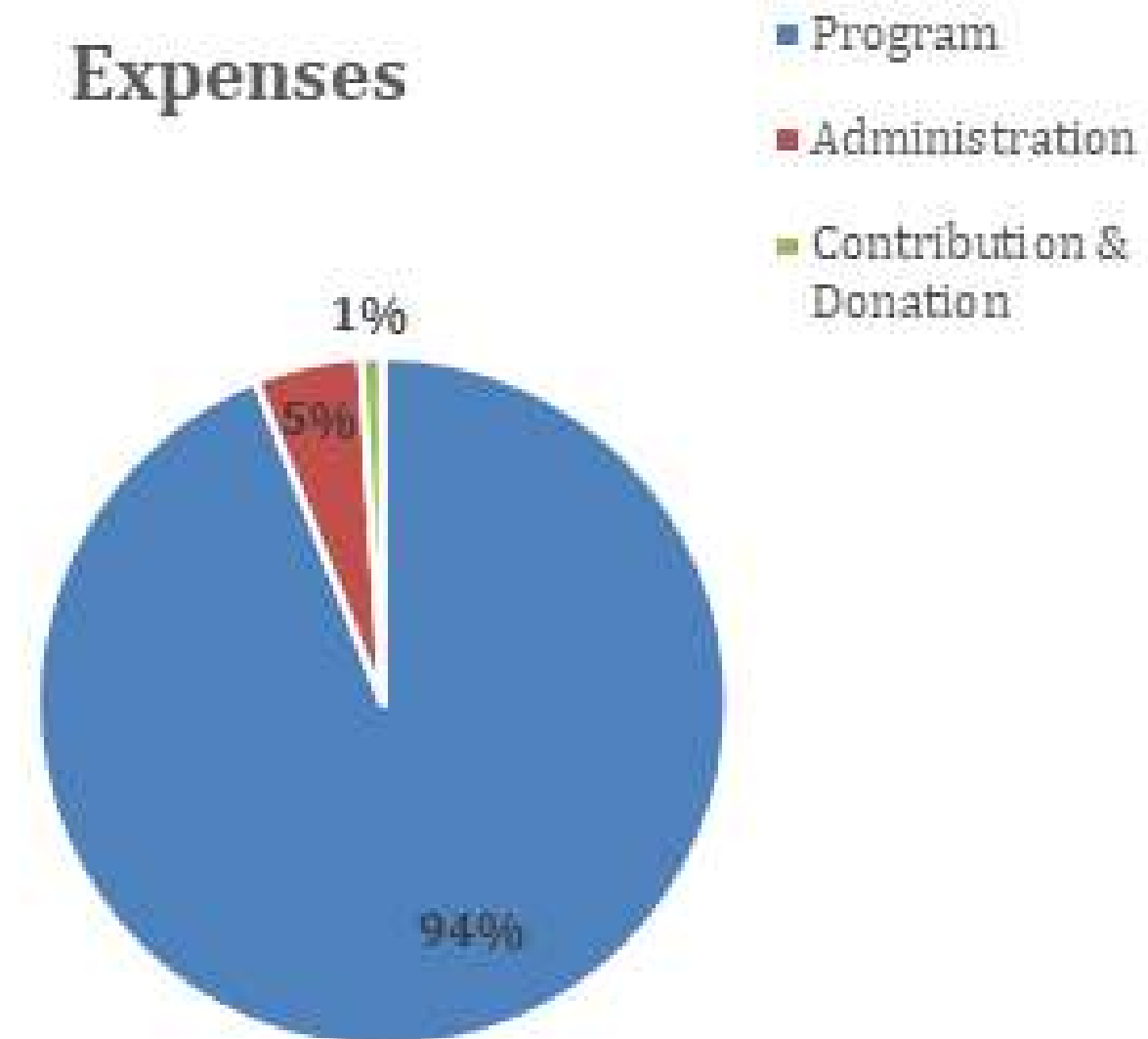
AVAG Financials of FY 2020-21

Revenues:

Global Donors -	Rs.74,40,532.40	(52.48%)
Community(UWF) -	Rs.62,30,010.20	(43.94%)
IG Unit -	Rs.5,07,300.00	(3.58%)
Total-	Rs.1,41,77,842.60	(100.00%)



Expenses



Expenses:

Program-	Rs. 1,27,85,124.46	(94.26%)
Administration -	Rs.7,72,487.66	(5.70%)
Contributions-	Rs.6,300.00	(0.05%)
Total-	Rs.1,35,63,912.12	(100.00%)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To beloved trustee Alain Bernard, the executives and the staff and volunteers who with their dedication and effort, make AVAG's work possible.

We are immensely grateful for all the donations we received this year, particularly for our Covid19 response initiatives, without which we would not have been able to support the communities we serve. We treasure the contributions of all our donors, friends, and well-wishers who assist us in our journey to support the communities we serve.

THANK YOU

AVAG ONLINE

Contact us at: avag@auroville.org.in

Visit us at: www.avag.in



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A U R O V I L L E V I L L A G E A C T I O N G R O U P