

Pondicherry Science Forum

WORK REPORT- 2024-25:

PSF work is organized in five sub-committees: The work done by each in the previous year is given below:

I. Science Communication Sub Committee

Children's Science Festival

- An interactive and engaging two-day science event held annually in the month of May for the Thulir illam science club students. The festival features 200 students and 30 resource persons participating in 8 corner activities, including nature, astronomy, origami, science experiments, photography etc.,

Environment Awareness Programmes

Guided learning tours to foster engagement with local ecological.

- **Bird Watching:** Observing birds at Ossudu and Kaliveli bird sanctuaries or river estuaries to understand ecosystems and environmental responsibility.
- **Nature Walk:** Guided walks in Puducherry's forests and mangroves, exploring local flora, fauna, and ecosystems.

Observation of Astronomical Events

- **Zero Shadow Days (April 21)** PSF, in association with Samagra Shiksha, Directorate of Education, Government of Puducherry, celebrated the day with a mass outreach program. All 218 government and government-aided schools in Puducherry participated in the event. PSF proposed and successfully implemented a project, benefiting 92,000 school children in Puducherry.
- **Night Sky Watching:** In the month of February PSF in association DEF organised a guided overnight stays at light pollution-free site at Auroville with experts, telescopes, and binoculars. In this program 80 astronomy enthusiasts participated

Observation of National & International Days of Importance

- **International Day of Bio Diversity:** PSF, in association with the Department of Forest and Wildlife, Government of Puducherry, celebrated the Int'l Biodiversity day with a day-long program for 50 Thulir Illam Science children at Dr. Abdul Kalam Science Center and Planetarium to promote awareness and education about biodiversity among the younger generation.
- **National Science Day:** PSF, in association with the Department of Physics, Bharatidasan Government College, celebrated National Science Day 2025 with lectures and interactive sessions.

Puducherry Children's Film Festival (2024)

- PSF in association with Alliance Française Pondicherry organised a two days children's film festival in June 2024 in which 165 children's and teachers participated in it. The festival aims to entertain, educate, empower, and encourage creativity among children through the medium of film.

Robotics Workshop for Children

PSF organized a two-day robotics hands-on workshop for school children, It provides them with an unique opportunity to learn and experiment with robotics technology. It aims to promote STEM education, creativity, and problem-solving skills in a practical and engaging way.

Future Programs

- Day Time Astronomy Program
- Nutrition Outreach Program for Children
- Book Reading camp for Teachers
- Children's Theatre Festival

Faites de la Science : A Unique Scientific Program of PSF

Since 2007, the Pondicherry Science Forum has been conducting the Make Science International Competition (Faites de la Science) , a distinctive scientific project based program that fosters innovation, aims to instill critical thinking and problem solving through mini-research projects and by design this is an interdisciplinary in nature.

Collaboration with the University of Paris-Saclay

PSF has a tie-up with the University of Paris-Saclay, which enables students from government schools to participate in scientific projects. A group of 3-4 students from grades 7-11 are selected to work on projects, which are then submitted to the University of Paris-Saclay for review.

Project Selection and Funding

The University of Paris-Saclay selects 12 project proposals and provides €30 as seed money to execute each project. The selected projects are then presented in a video format and sent to the University of Paris-Saclay for evaluation.

Awards and Recognition

A jury comprising science faculty members from the University of Paris-Saclay selects and announces the winners. The awards include:

- One first prize worth €300
- Three second prizes worth €100 each
- Certificates from the University of Paris-Saclay for all participants

Funding and Support

While the University of Paris-Saclay provides seed money and prize money, PSF is responsible for raising funds to support the training, preparation, and project completion of the participating students.

Expansion and Reach

For the past 18 years, only students from Puducherry District participated in the program. However, over the last two years, the program has been extended to include students from Karaikal District as well.

National Children's Science Congress

The Pondicherry Science Forum has been the implementing agency for the National Children's Science Congress (NCSC) in Puducherry UT since its inception in 1993.

Annual Training and Project Execution

Every year, we train Guide Teachers based on the focal theme and sub-themes provided by the NCSTC, New Delhi. These training sessions are conducted at the district level in three regions: Puducherry, Karaikal, and Mahe. Students selected by the Guide Teachers execute projects at the district level.

Evaluation and Selection Process

After district-level evaluation, 30 projects are selected for the state-level congress from the three districts. From these, six projects are chosen to represent Puducherry at the national level.

Awards and Recognition

We provide certificates at all levels to Child Scientists, Guide Teachers, Evaluators, and Coordinators, recognizing their work and achievements.

31st NCSC Participation

The 31st NCSC was held at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, where six Child Scientists, two Guide Teachers, and two Coordinators from Puducherry participated, representing our state at the national level.

Future of NCSC

The future of NCSC is uncertain, with concerns about its potential discontinuation. The NCSC has been a vital platform for promoting science education and innovation among children. Losing this platform would be a significant setback for science education in Puducherry and India as a whole.

Alternative Plans

In light of the uncertainty surrounding NCSC, we have discussed the possibility of conducting a similar program under the banner of AIPSN (All India People's Science Network). This would ensure that the standards and quality of the program are maintained.

Some possible ways to conduct the program under AIPSN include:

- a.) Partnering with local organizations and educational institutions to host the event.
- b.) Seeking funding from alternative sources to support the program.
- c.) Maintaining the same standards and evaluation criteria to ensure the quality of the program.

By exploring these possibilities, we hope to ensure the continuation of a program that promotes science education and innovation among children, even if the NCSC is discontinued.

Science Bulletin: "Ariviyal Murasu"

The Pondicherry Science Forum (PSF) publishes a four-page monthly science bulletin called "Ariviyal Murasu". Initially published bi-monthly, it has been a monthly publication since 2006. We distribute the bulletin via India post on the 10th of every month to all the PSF members free of cost and to all Govt. schools and Govt-aided schools with the support of the Department of Science, Technology, and Environment (DSTE).

Subscription Details

- 238 copies are sent to PSF members
- 437 copies are sent to govt. & govt. aided schools

- Total copies printed 675

Books

The publication division of Pondicherry Science Forum released a book in March 2025, on the occasion of Zero Shadow Day, written by Prof. Dr. R. Madivanane.

Challenges and Future Plans

We face significant difficulties in sourcing articles and news for the bulletin. To address this:

- Plans to host a competition to encourage students and the public to submit essays and articles.
- Reprint and publish previously released pamphlets and science books by PSF.

Financial Constraints

Rising economic costs have made it challenging to continue publishing the bulletin monthly:

- We plans to increase the subscription amount.
- The Union Government has announced the withdrawal of the concessional fee for sending monthly magazines from December 2025. So, from January 2026 onwards, an additional charge will be incurred for sending the bulletin via post.
- The DSTE has also stopped supporting the science bulletin. But PSF continue sending the bulletin to schools.
- We must explore alternative funding sources to ensure the continuation of this valuable resource.

II. SAMAM: Gender Sub committee

Overview

- Total Savings Groups: 167 groups
- Total Members: 2,505 members
- Part-time Workers/Village Coordinators: 25
- Full-time Workers: 4
- Contact Villages: 23 villages
- Total Savings Amount: Rs. 2 Crores
- Total Distributed Loan Amount: Rs. 14 Crores (SHG Savings internal Loan + Bank Loan + Samam Central Loan)

Savings Group Activities

- The group holds two meetings every month, where members discuss newsletters, including the Samam Newsletter and Magalir Sinthanai.
- Members review and discuss the committee's accounts on a regular basis.
- The group intervenes in local public matters, prompting government action.

Samam Trainings and Activities

- SAMAM Executive Committee Meetings are held every two months.
- SAMAM Office Bearers Meetings are held every month.

- In September and October 2024, 300 SHG Presidents and Secretaries from Samam groups received training in six centres on topics such as leadership, superstitions, women's politics, and women's culture.
- A two-day training session for 25 leading cadres of the Samam movement was held in February 2025, focusing on women and public speaking, exploitation of women's labor, women's reading habits, and women's culture.
- Impart training to new groups on group operations and record-keeping.

Impact, Initiatives, events and Celebrations:

- 470 Samam members have received loans to start individual small-scale enterprises.
- **Cancer screening camp** : The Samam Movement and PHC jointly organized a cancer screening camp in February 2025, with 161 women participating.
- **Books Sales Campaign** : It aims to promote continuous reading among women and students. In April 2025, books worth Rs. One Lakh were sold in 80 titles.
- **Thulir Illam** (Science Club): operates in 20 locations, engaging 280 students in scientific activities, educational tours, and quizzes.
- **International Women's Day 2025**: Sports competitions, seminars, and rallies were held in 20 villages, with over 1,500 women participating.
- **Breast Feeding Awareness Rally**: Samam has worked with Public Health Center's for the past 15 years to create awareness about breastfeeding among pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young women in villages.

III. Health Sub-Committee Report.

Background:

In the year 2023, we successfully organized the "Right to Health Convention" in Puducherry, which brought together various associations, including NGOs, trade unions, and community organizations under the banner of ***Makkal Nalvazhvu Iyakkam (People's Health Movement, Puducherry Chapter)*** . Following the convention, we convened three meetings to discuss and plan health-related activities.

Key Themes and Activities:

Our health activities focused on three critical themes:

1. Resisting Commercialization of Healthcare:

- a) Opposed the growing trend of private medical colleges and their impact on healthcare accessibility and affordability.
- b) Highlighted problems with insurance coverage and protested against user fees charged by private hospitals.

2. Universalization of Primary Health Care:

- a) Emphasized the need for strengthening primary health care services, particularly in the context of rising non-communicable diseases like diabetes, bp etc.,
- b) Pushed for improved healthcare infrastructure and services, especially in rural and underserved areas.

3. Interventions in Urban Planning and Social Determinants of Health:

- a) Addressed pressing issues like sewage management, cholera outbreaks, and dengue fever in urban areas.
- b) Highlighted the importance of social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and employment, in shaping health outcomes.

Challenges:

Due to the unavailability of key functionaries, we were unable to meet as planned after March 2025. However, we intend to resume our activities after July 2025, with renewed focus and energy.

Future plans:

- a) Continue to advocate for the universalization of primary health care and resist the commercialization of healthcare.
- b) Strengthen partnerships with local communities, NGOs, and government agencies to address pressing health concerns.
- c) Develop a comprehensive plan to address social determinants of health and urban planning issues.

Corrections Reads fine. Two small changes. Instead of stakeholders use the word association. And instead of advocated for you could write problems with insurance coverage. Not a big issue but we are not clear that we need these insurance schemes. However we point out that the schemes are not living up to their promise.

IV. PSF EDUCATION Sub-Committee Report

1. Conference on New Education Policy (NEP)

After the release of the New Education Policy draft by the Central Government, PSF, in association with other NGOs and community organizations, hosted a conference and discussed the NEP and gather opinions from various organisation represenatives numbered around 100 individuals.

2. Submission of Demands on New Education Policy (NEP)

Following a series of meetings to discuss the New Education Policy (NEP), the Education Sub-Committee compiled a list of demands and submitted them in person to the Governor and Chief Minister of Puducherry

3. Manifesto to Political Parties

During the Parliament election, the PSF sub-committee took a proactive step by submitting a manifesto related to the new education policy to all the political parties in Puducherry.

4. Conference on the Implementation of NEP in Puducherry

To assess the current state of education and understand the pros and cons of implementing the New Education Policy (NEP) in Puducherry, the PSF Education Sub-Committee organized a conference. The conference featured a keynote address by Prof. Dr. Jawahar Nesan, who shared his expertise and insights on NEP.

5. Meeting with Puducherry Member of Parliament

Following the 2024 Parliament election, the Education Sub-Committee met with the newly elected Member of Parliament from Puducherry, Mr. V. Vaithiyalingam. During the meeting, the sub-committee submitted a request letter, urging Mr. Vaithiyalingam to raise questions and concerns regarding the New Education Policy (NEP) in the Parliament.

6. Awareness Campaign on NEP and CBSE Implementation

In Puducherry, the New Education Policy (NEP) and CBSE curriculum have been fully implemented in government schools. To inform the general public about the advantages and disadvantages of this implementation, the Education Sub-Committee has been distributing booklets, pamphlets, and other educational materials. However, the progress of this awareness campaign has been slow, and the sub-committee aims to intensify its efforts to reach a wider audience.

V. Environment and Sustainable Development:

(to be completed)