Auroville Citizens' Assembly Pilot

Exploring the potential of randomly selected community members in collective decision-making

Report on process and outcomes

June 2021

Assembly topic:

A water vision for Auroville

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on behalf of

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<u>Acknowledgments & Thanks</u>

Abstract

A pilot Citizens' Assembly was undertaken in Auroville in early 2021 to determine whether and how this tool could increase participation, skill-building and community-building in collective decision-making processes in Auroville. The initiative also aimed to explore the Assembly model's potential for increasing community awareness and education on the issues under consideration, and in producing outcomes that were considered valid for both the community at large and its Working Groups. This pilot process, on the community-proposed topic of 'A Water Vision for Auroville', was held on alternate weekends during January-March 2021. The pilot showed success in engaging community members that had never, or only rarely, engaged in collective decision-making – and the majority said they would participate in a Citizens' Assembly again if they were selected. Participants found the process to be the most rewarding part of the assembly, and gave significant value to the building of their skills around bias and listening. An overwhelming majority of participants said they would trust a Citizens' Assembly process for dealing with other community issues in future. The outcomes were not only a Water Vision for Auroville, but accompanying suggestions for its implementation (while educational videos on water in Auroville produced for the Assembly are now publicly available as an educational resource). In final feedback sessions, the community at large, water players and Working Groups were all positive about the model's potential as a collective decision-making tool for Auroville. They supported the pilot's outcomes, yet were concerned that these might not be implemented due to lack of sustained community effort. The organising team is now focusing on follow-up and implementation of the pilot's outcomes, and is also exploring topics for another pilot assembly which would have predefined implementation pathways.

Outline of the Report

- **Part I** of this report evaluates the potential of the Citizens' Assembly model for informed, participatory decision making within Auroville.
- **Part II** of this report presents the outcomes of the specific topic of this Citizens' Assembly: a water vision for Auroville.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In 2019 a team of Aurovilians began to explore the possibility of implementing a Citizens' Assembly (CA) process in Auroville, and in October 2020- January 2021 carried out a pilot on the topic of "a water vision for Auroville".

What is a Citizens' Assembly?

This model brings together a number of randomly selected community members over a number of days to explore an issue faced by and affecting their community as a whole. Throughout the Assembly participants are educated on key skills required to understand and explore the topic as a group and then presented with information from a wide and balanced range of perspectives (by experts, stakeholders, citizens directly impacted, etc.). They are then supported to deliberate on what they have heard and develop recommendations as a group.

Over the last few years, several municipalities, states, and countries across the world (including India) have utilized a 'Citizens' Assembly' model to support collective decision making processes. This model has been particularly effective in helping communities come to a decision about highly contentious topics, such as abortion in Ireland. It has also helped develop community-backed plans and visions for issues such as flood protection, agriculture and climate change.

Why pilot a Citizens' Assembly in Auroville?

The Citizens' Assembly (CA) core team strongly felt that the participatory decision-making model of a Citizens' Assembly was worth exploring in the Auroville context, given that it has good potential to support Auroville's key ideals of human unity and unending education, and to address crippling challenges within Auroville's current collective decision-making culture and processes. These include lack of engagement from the majority of the population, lack of diversity in those who choose to participate, lack of understanding of/education regarding the challenges the community faces, and lack of constructive communication skills leading to often hostile and polarized dynamics in deliberations.

Specifically, we felt the Citizens' Assembly model could be effective in engaging more community members than in current participatory governance processes (such as General Meetings and the Selection Process), supporting the ideal of human unity to be realised through such processes as random selection, small group work, relationship-building activities, as well as a strong educational component. The latter very much aligns with Auroville's ideal of unending education. In addition to providing participants with in-depth and diverse perspectives on the issue at hand (a critical yet lacking dimension in our collective decision-making processes), in a CA process they also learn critical thinking, active listening and how to recognise personal biases and biased information. As these skills and capacities spread within our community we expect they will help build a more conscious and mature collective, something which we feel is essential to the project of Auroville, and urgent to address given the prevalence of dysfunctional and divisive dynamics in many of our collective forums.

How was the Auroville Citizens' Assembly pilot launched?

Our team began exploring the idea of applying the Citizens' Assembly model in Auroville in August 2019. Following discussions with a wide range of community members: initially at a sounding board of 20 Aurovilians in October 2019, subsequently in meetings with the Residents Assembly Revival group and Youthlink, in January at a General Meeting, and finally with the FAMC, there was strong agreement both that this project was worth pursuing, and that the most effective way to understand whether the model would work in Auroville would be to run a small pilot and assess the outcomes. There was also input given regarding the design of the pilot at each of these sessions. The Citizens' Assembly project was therefore undertaken as a pilot 'action research' project, funded by SAIIER.

Key Aspects of the Auroville Citizens' Assembly pilot

Selection of the Topic

The topic chosen was 'developing a water vision for Auroville' following a call for ideas from the community. We received 27 suggestions for topics, all of which were assessed using the following criteria relevant to a Citizens' Assembly process:

1. Is the topic controversial/challenging enough? (A Citizens' Assembly is intended for controversial/challenging topics).

2. Does the topic concern the whole community? (A Citizens' Assembly is intended for topics that concern the entire population it draws from in random selection).

3. Can the outcomes of the process be implemented by Auroville itself? (The outcomes of a Citizens' Assembly should be implementable by the population that undertakes it)

4. Will it be possible to provide presentations from diverse viewpoints? (A key aspect of a Citizens' Assembly process is the presentation of evidence from various stakeholders/perspectives)

5. Can the evidence related to this topic be shared in the public domain? (Legal and ethical constraints, liabilities and considerations need to be taken into account in all Citizens' Assembly processes).

6. Is the scope of the topic suitable for a pilot i.e. not too controversial and/or complex to address?

Out of those suggested, we found 3 topics that met the above criteria. The other two were already being taken up by other groups in Auroville, therefore we settled on water. Key reasons for water being shortlisted were that a) it was an identified need by the water players, b) the high level of community interest in the topic and c) that there was in-principle buy-in from stakeholders (notably the Water Group and TDC) for implementation of the Citizens' Assembly's outcomes.

Design of the Pilot

The pilot was designed with input from the wider community at the meetings outlined above, and advice from the the director of the Sortition Foundation (Brett Hennig), who has supported the establishment of many Citizens' Assemblies globally.

The full list of topics and processes by which we arrived at water is detailed in Appendix A.

Key aspects of the Auroville pilot were:

● Random selection of 140 participants from the Masterlist of Aurovilians and Newcomers over 16 (with no stratification by age/gender/nationality) with the aim of arriving at a minimum of 20 and maximum of 40 participants.
● 8 sessions (Citizens' Assemblies globally range from 2 to 40 sessions)
● The use of videos in lieu of live presentations due to COVID restrictions

Pilot timeline

The CA met for 8 sessions in all, over a total period of 12 weeks, from 31 Oct 2020 – 23 Jan 2021:

Session 1: Introduction & exercises on bias and deep listening

Sessions 2 - 6: Evidence sessions (see details of presentations in Part 2 of this report)

Session 7: Finalising the vision

Session 8: Finalising the suggestion for implementation

Optional Sessions: Three optional interactive sessions were held with presenters and participants between session 6 (the last of the evidence sessions) and session 7 (the first finalisation session):

- a **panel discussion** with the water players that participants wished to hear more from
- two **informal sessions** with some of the water players and participants on the ideas that had emerged around a water vision and suggestion for implementation

Since the assembly sessions concluded in January 2021, the core team has worked on sharing, collecting feedback on and evaluating the pilot process and its outcomes for the community (an extensive analysis of which can be found in Part 1 of this report). The core group has also supported an implementation team to carry further the recommendations made by the assembly for water in Auroville and to share the vast resource on water created for the assembly (see Part 2 of this report).

Part I

Evaluation of the Auroville Citizens' Assembly Pilot

in terms of a collective decision-making process in the Auroville context

Part I of this report evaluates the Citizens' Assembly pilot in terms of its potential towards supporting collective decision-making in Auroville.

Goal of the research
Our key research question for this action research project of a pilot Citizens' Assembly in Auroville was *"To what extent can the Citizens' Assembly model support capacity-building and participation in collective decision-making processes in Auroville, towards realising its ideals of human unity and unending education within these?"*

Our goal was to evaluate whether, how, and to what extent key features of the Citizens' Assembly model are facilitative of constructive collective decision-making in Auroville, and could be applied in future in our community processes.

What we evaluated

We evaluated the following key aspects of this collective decision-making process:

- **Participation** – *Did random selection create a diverse and representative group? Was there participation from a wide range of community members, representative of Auroville's diversity? What were reasons/barriers for participation, and what insights can this offer for other community processes to be more inclusive and representative? Was the use of simultaneous translation feasible and effective in encouraging participation from non-native English speakers?*

- **Capacity-Building** – *Did the Citizens' Assembly model build capacity in participants for collectively and harmoniously addressing a community challenge? Did it build capacity to hold different viewpoints in a non-polarizing way? Did it build trust and understanding between a diverse grouping of community members? Did it build trust for collective processes in the community at large?*

- ***Education –*** *Was the presentation and deliberation of different perspectives effective in educating a random group of community members on a complex topic with the aim of making informed recommendations? Was the Citizens' Assembly effective in increasing community awareness around the topic?*

- **Process** – *Was the process seen as valuable – by participants, the broader community, and Working Groups? What elements of the process design were key to achieving this,where did it fall short and why?*

- **Outcome** – *Were participants satisfied with the outcome (a water vision for Auroville, and suggestions for its implementation)? Was the outcome perceived to be valid and implementable by the water players? Was the outcome perceived to be valid and implementable by Working Groups & the community at large?*

How we evaluated it:

- We analysed data (60 responses) of the community members who were randomly selected – those who chose to attend or not, or dropped out, and their reasons.
- Participants completed questionnaires before, during and after the assembly
- Presenters (hereafter "Water Players") completed questionnaires after their presentations (video-recorded interviews) and interaction with the participants, and after being presented with the outcome.
- Observers (members of the CA core team) completed surveys at the end of each session
- The core facilitation team had a focus group session after the completion of the process
- The advisory team had a focus group session after the completion of the process
- The CA core team completed questionnaires after the completion of the process
- 5 Working Groups (Working Committee, Funds and Assets Management Committee, Town Development Council – l'Avenir d'Auroville, Budget Coordination Committee, Entry Board)   as well as the Resident's Assembly Service (RAS) participated in focus group feedback sessions (in the format of a presentation followed by an open discussion) held by CA core team members, after which 10 members returned a questionnaire.
- Community members (42 responses) filled out feedback forms after community presentations in different settings.

In addition a documentary video was filmed with responses from participants before, during, and after the process and interviews with the CA core team members.

Notes from the research team:

1. Due to an intensification of Covid-19 during our focus group round with Working Groups, we were not able to meet with more groups. We particularly regret that a meeting scheduled with the Auroville Council had to be cancelled as their members were directly affected.
2. It was a challenge to have comprehensive feedback forms while keeping them short to encourage more people to respond. Since most of these forms were filled out at the end of the sessions, we did not want to take too much of the respondents' time. However, we are grateful that participants and water players cooperated and offered generously their time and insights for this research project.
3. The core facilitation and advisory team had focus group sessions following the process. This is the reason for the variation in the format of the responses (others are collected from feedback forms). While it was originally envisaged that facilitators would complete feedback forms at the end of sessions, they felt it was too fresh for them to reflect, in addition to being understandably quite tired after the sessions!
4. We are aware that the responses to the scoring type questions would have different bases for different people. The averages expressed should be considered as indicative of the general sense of the respondents rather than an absolute.
5. All the figures, except for the scoring type responses, have been synthesised from qualitative responses to the questions mentioned in the title of the figure.

Insights from the Evaluation

<u>Participation</u>

Did random selection create a diverse and representative group? Was there participation from a wide range of community members, representative of Auroville's diversity? What were reasons/barriers for participation, and what insights can this offer for other community processes to be more inclusive and representative?

- **Assembly Participants**

In January 2020, 140 Aurovilians and Newcomers over 16 years of age were selected at random (using an algorithm) from the Masterlist and invited to participate In the pilot. Of these, 34 agreed to participate. However, due to COVID restrictions and lockdowns, we had to suspend the assembly after an initial session in March. We resumed the assembly in October 2020 with 20 participants continuing on from the March batch, plus an additional 7 new participants confirmed from a new random selection of 40 Aurovilans and Newcomers from the same Masterlist, arriving at a total of 27 participants for the resumed assembly. Of these 27, an average of 18 participated in all 8 sessions from October 2020 to January 2021. In total, 41 people participated in the CA, although some only in the first March session.

<u>The below data is from a survey conducted with the initial (January) random selection of 140:</u>
Initial random selection: About half (53%) of the people initially selected had already heard about the Citizens' Assembly pilot when they were invited to join, and had a clear understanding of the process. And most (79%) were interested in participating.
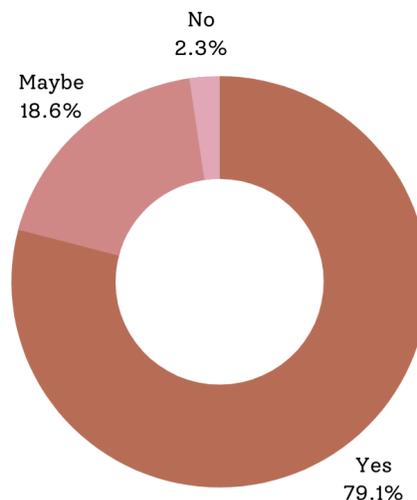
Fig. 1: Randomly selected community members' response to
'Are you interested in participating in the CA?'

Within the same group, most were not active in any community decision-making processes reportedly predominantly due to lack of time but they also felt these other forums were not a safe space in which to interact, or they lacked trust in these processes.
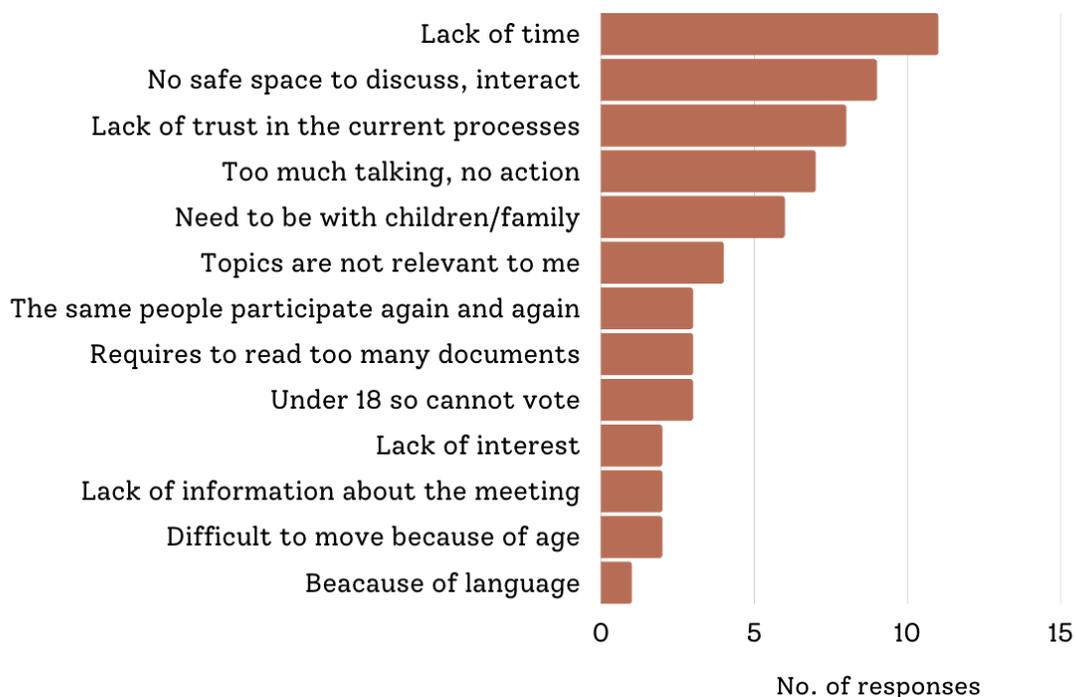
Fig. 2: Randomly selected community members' responses to
'What prevents you from participating in community meetings?'

The barriers to participation in the Citizens' Assembly pilot specifically were, in descending order, lack of time, inability to commit to all sessions, lack of trust in the process, or lack of confidence or ability to understand. For those who declined to participate, lack of time (busy, not available) was cited as the main reason. Childcare was offered as part of the Citizens' Assembly budget, removing that barrier for participation for parents – although not succeeding in doing so for parents with more than one child.

Composition of pilot participants - was it a diverse and representative group?
Of the 34 participants from the initial (January) random selection who accepted to join the Citizens' Assembly, the majority were not active in community decision-making processes: 30% of participants rarely attended community meetings, 11% never attended meetings, and 22% sometimes attended meetings.
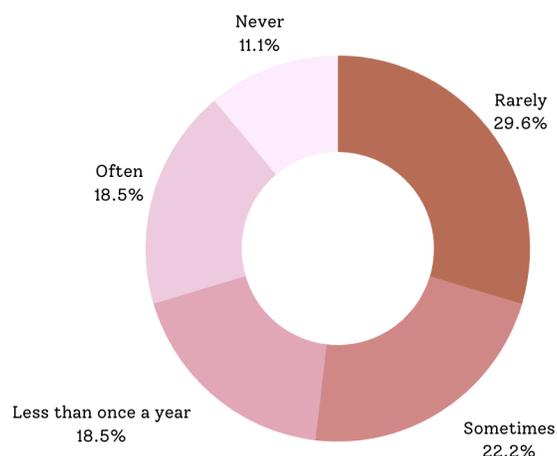
Fig. 3: Participants' response to 'how often do you attend community meetings?'

A majority of participants rarely (29%) or never (32%) voted in RADs.
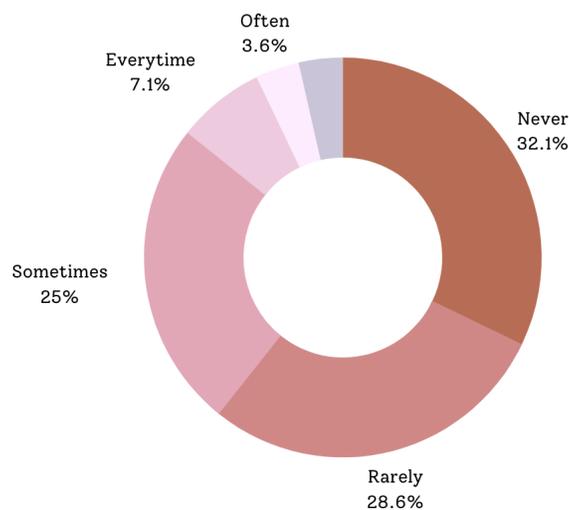
Fig. 4: Participants' response to 'how often do you vote in a RAD?'

The Citizens' Assembly drew participants from a wide range of language groups (see Fig. 5). English was the predominant language (spoken as a first language) amongst participants and 73% of participants said they did not need translation. For those participants who required translation, the languages requested were French, Tamil and Korean (see more on translation in the next section).
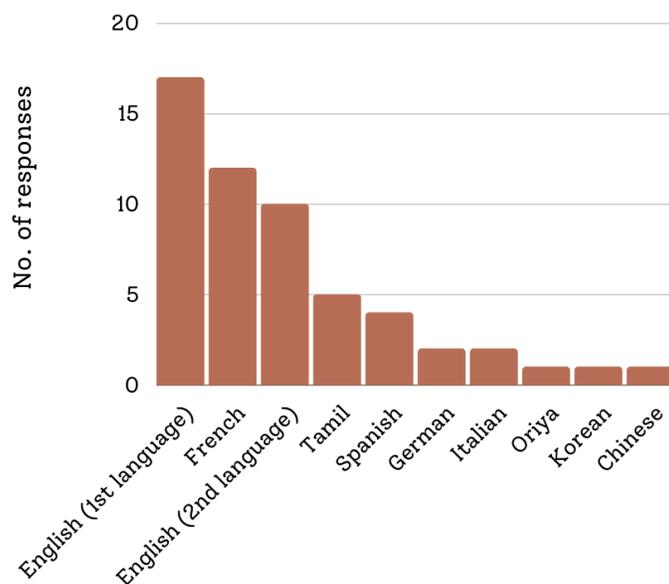
Fig. 5: Linguistic distribution amongst participants

Both the Citizens' Assembly core team and the research team noted that defining 'diversity' and adequate 'representation' of that diversity was complex and had many aspects and nuances which we do not have the data for. In one of the early presentations to the community, the idea of stratified selection for the CA (one that can ensure selection of quotas of people according to various parameters, for example nationality, age, gender etc.) was discussed but there was strong feedback for the selection to be completely random.

Recognising that the question of diversity is even more complex in the context of Auroville, it was decided to not follow any stratified selection but to use random selection instead. This meant that the composition of the participating group was arbitrary. However, efforts were made towards supporting all willing participants to attend the sessions through options like access to translations (only Tamil was requested), childcare and focus on small group discussions where everybody can share their views. This allowed participation from people that would otherwise find it challenging to contribute to community discussions, meetings and processes.

The core team also noted that this approach helped in creating a participant group with diverse age groups, languages, cultures, experience in Auroville (Newcomers were part of both organising and participating teams), experience of participation in community processes, priorities and viewpoints, more than what one would observe in the current collective processes in Auroville. While there is no hard data to quantify this, the breadth of the outcomes and the analyses above reveal some useful information regarding this aspect.

(Please see the Appendix D for recommendations of what more could be done in this regard for future assemblies).

<u>The following analysis is based on the experience of all those who actually participated in the Citizens' Assembly:</u>

Translation – Was it feasible and effective in encouraging participation from non-native English speakers?

The use of simultaneous translation was originally envisaged for both the presentations from the water players, and the discussions between participants. As presentations were filmed due to Covid, these were dubbed and subtitled into Tamil instead.

- **Tamil translation & dubbing of presentations**

The Advisory team noted that Tamil interviewees were touched by the lengths went through to make the process accessible to Tamil speakers through dubbing and translations, and that it engaged the Tamil community (beyond assembly participants and water players) who mobilised and supported translations and dubbing.

Even though this translating and dubbing was very time and effort intensive, and may seem disproportionate to the number of Tamil participants in this particular CA, it might help increase Tamil participation in future CAs.

- **Simultaneous translation of participant discussions**

The facilitator focus group noted that simultaneous Tamil translation was challenging at times, particularly when very conceptual ideas were being explored, and that what worked really well was having a small group discussion in Tamil rather than a mixed group using English with simultaneous translation into Tamil.

It should be noted that the four participants who required simultaneous translation dropped out before the end of the process. Reasons given were family hardship, and inability to miss work.

The core team noted that despite tremendous effort put in translations, regular follow up and thorough facilitation, a few participants might have not been able to contribute fully due to challenges with the language and manner of expression. The following are the excerpts from their reflections:

> *"Perhaps we need to put more effort into being culturally sensitive to other ways of knowing, being and deciding."*

> *"Perhaps we need to explore different ways of sharing and recording ideas."*

> *"I felt participants were all engaged in the process. There were limitations in expression due to language, shyness, but I felt the process gave everyone a voice to contribute."*

Drop-outs:

- 8 of the 34 participants who began the first process in March did not continue. Reasons recorded are as follows: 2 were not interested to continue, 5 were unavailable due to work/travel/childcare (schools were closed due to Covid), 1 gave no reason (but it was noted that they had difficulty with the english language).
- 6 of the 27 participants who started or resumed in October dropped out before the end of the process.Reasons given were personal/family hardship, and inability to miss/busy work.

What insights can be offered for other community processes to be more inclusive and representative?

➔ A key barrier to participation was lack of time, community processes should therefore strive to be efficient in terms of time
➔ Encourage community members' places of work to grant them leave to participate
➔ Provide budgeted child care for parents to be able to participate
➔ Provide translation to those who need it
➔ Favour small group discussions to enable a majority of participants to express themselves and be heard.

- **Assembly Presenters (Water Players)**

The Citizens' Assembly Advisory team noted there was a wide and inclusive selection of water players, which was appreciated by the water players themselves (see graph below).

Most of the water players they reached out to for the presentations and interactions were willing to participate.

Only a few (3 or 4) water players reached out to declined participation, for one this was specifically to the process: the individual "did not resonate with this kind of community process".

For the remainder, low participation in certain parts of the process were not reflections of the CA forum, but related to the interests, time availability, and personal circumstances of the water players.

A fraction that did not engage much was the foresters. The reasons for this could not be conclusively determined, but seemed to be due to a mix of personal, COVID and other life circumstances.

Due to COVID restrictions, the CA advisory team recorded interviews with the water players which were then edited together into theme-based videos (i.e. integrated water management, water quality & water qualities etc.). These videos were then presented to the participants in the sessions.

The Advisory team noted that the video format itself enabled a wide range of perspectives to be included (30!), which would not have been possible with live presentations. They also observed that this format, in which the CA core team goes to the speaker and informally interviews them, was an easy, low-time investment way for water players to participate (compared to having to

prepare a whole presentation and deliver it to a larger group of people). They also remarked that less "vociferous" players could also be engaged in this way – an intimacy and a safe space was established and they were able to communicate via this platform.

The Water Players' rated the diversity represented within the water players for the assembly at 4.3/5.

Read more about the video presentations and feedback on the same from the water players on page 17.

- **Working Groups**

During the focus group discussion with the Entry Group, it was noted that the inclusion of Newcomers in a process with such a strong educational and social component was positive for their integration within the community (and that it also had value for Aurovilians for whom few such forums of interaction exist).

Capacity-Building

Did the Citizens' Assembly model build capacity in participants for collectively and harmoniously addressing a community challenge – did it build capacity to hold different viewpoints in a non-polarizing way? Did it build trust and understanding between a diverse grouping of participant community members? Did it build trust for collective processes in the community at large?

Participants expressed that the learning exercises enabled them to become more conscious of the importance of listening, and aware of their biases (conscious and unconscious).

> *"It's our work to become aware of our bias and watch how it may influence our thinking, communication and decision-making."*

> *"Learned to listen carefully first and based on others' points of view we should react."*

> *"I learnt that one has to shut off his/her mind to really truly listen."*

> *"It spotlighted in a very neutral/safe way our tendencies of how we react when faced with so many different opinions, fears, concerns, lacking in communication skills when meeting to come up with solutions to a problem."*

Participants gave significant value to the building of their skills around bias and listening (an average of 4.4 /5). They believed these new skills/capacities would change the way in which they participated in the Citizens' Assembly and other collective processes in Auroville.

"This will help me to move towards collective discussions and listen to others' views and find a solution through consensus."

"I am very supportive of the Citizens' Assembly initiative where we are constantly trying to improve the facilitation of debates and structure better decision-making processes."

Participants believe that their new awareness of bias (their capacity to recognise bias in themselves) would change the way in which they participated in Citizens' Assembly and other collective processes in Auroville in future.

Participants also noted how this capacity-building, coupled with the small group discussion format enabled them to consider other people's points of view and grow in their understanding of others, and how this enabled them to connect closely with Auroville's key values and polarities to dissolve.

Facilitators

Capacity-building for listening: Facilitators noted that the capacity-building component of the process on listening (a pair deep listening exercise and a role play - see Appendix B) worked really well. The activities served to establish the "ground rules" for the small group discussions in the rest of the CA process. While facilitators provided reminders to listen actively throughout the process, and felt that participants listened to each other well in pair sharings and small group discussions, they noted that more capacity-building listening exercises could have been inserted throughout the process.

Capacity-building for bias: Facilitators noted that holding a presentation on bias following the role play worked well as it helped to depersonalise 'bias' even further than what was explored in character, by highlighting that all humans are biased. However, it was also noted that the presentation on bias didn't seem to have much impact with people with no previous experience of this work, notably some Tamil participants. Facilitators made a note to think about how to address this in future, including checking in with Koodam as to whether they had any experience with the latter. They also felt that the bias sessions could have been revived towards the end of the process, to help anchor the learning around it.

Capacity-building for a collective process: Facilitators noted that it worked well to develop "ground rules" for the Citizens' Assembly that came from the participants.

Education

Was the presentation and deliberation of different perspectives effective in educating a random group of community members regarding a complex topic and towards making informed recommendations?

Participants generally felt they were able to make sense of the information presented (4.1 /5). Although some participants (3.3 /5) would have preferred live presentations from the water players, they largely felt that the quality and content of the videos was good (4.4 /5), and that

the information had clarity (4.2 / 5). Participants noted that their knowledge about the water situation in Auroville significantly increased by the time the Citizens' Assembly finished, from 2.6 (recorded at the beginning of the assembly) to 4.1 (recorded at the end of the assembly) out of a maximum score of 5.
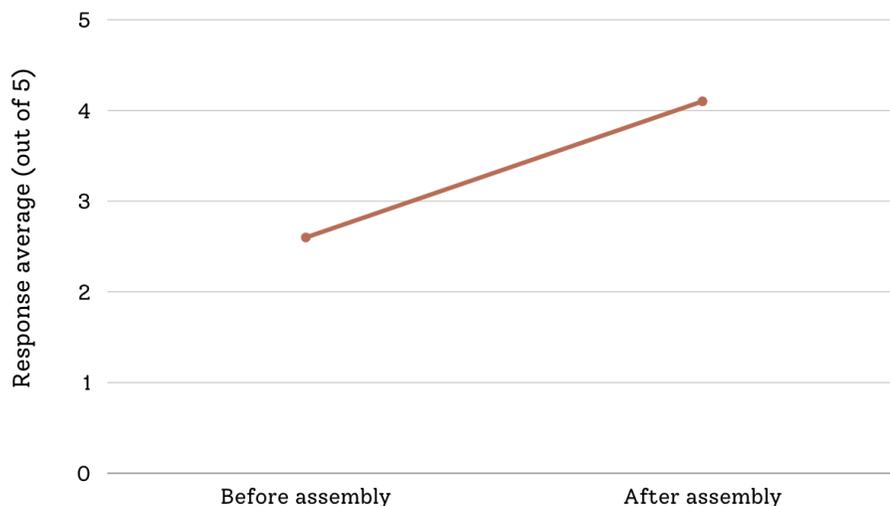
Fig. 6: Average of responses from participants to-
'Your knowledge about the water situation in Auroville'

Facilitators noted that the optional interactive sessions between participants and presenters should have been part of the mandatory participation. They also noted that the duration of the CA needed to be thought of in light of the topic.

The Advisory Team estimated that the presentation and deliberation of different perspectives was effective at educating a group of randomly selected citizens on the complex topic of water, and that they were, at the end of this process, able to make informed recommendations.

An input into the learning aspect of CA is that there could perhaps also be a training for participants to be able to learn how to understand nuances, of which there are many in complex topic fields like water.

Among the **Water Players**, there were many who expressed their surprise at the extensive scope of both the vision and the suggestions for implementation considering that the participants were not 'water experts'. They appreciated the wide range of perspectives (30 water player interviews) that were presented to the participants and helped shape their understanding on the topic. However, some expressed that they would have also liked to see interviews from people in the bioregion, especially farmers.

A Note on Content Delivery
Originally, the presentations from the water players were to be delivered live. Due to COVID restrictions, the CA advisory team recorded interviews with the water players, which were then

edited together into theme-based videos (i.e. integrated water management, water quality & water qualities etc.). These videos were then presented to the participants in the sessions.

Water Players's feedback on the video presentations:
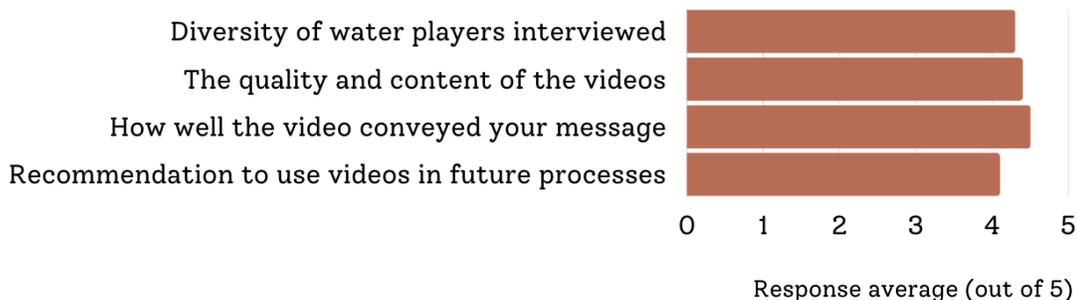
Fig. 7: Water players' feedback on content and format of presentations.

Following is an excerpt from one of the responses which summarises thoughts expressed by many:

> " *Benefits of creating videos: can be used in future, speakers open up more intimately in a one-on-one conversation than presenting in front of a large group.*
>
> *Challenges of videos: Speakers (including myself!) divert their attention and go off on tangents making the topic difficult to follow (whereas a live presentation demands further focus to stay on point)."*

The Advisory Team estimates that the videos present a valuable resource to the community: they provide a record for future reference and also for the field of water which does not as yet have any such resources available (see also on community awareness, next section).

For educational purposes, the Advisory team also felt that it was useful to be able to edit out technical jargon. And that the subtitling in the videos helped people understand what was being said in spite of accents, different speeds of speaking, etc.

Was the Citizens' Assembly effective in increasing community awareness around the topic?

The Advisory Team estimated that the CA did raise community awareness on the topic of water, especially through the videos, which were made accessible to the public (on YouTube). Screening these at a community venue (MMC) was a great way to include the community in the CA process, as well as educate and raise awareness on water. The translation of all interviews in Tamil has also created a vast resource for education on water within the Tamil speaking community in Auroville and the bioregion.

Facilitators observed there was a clear lack of understanding within the community and among the speakers regarding the overall process.

Both the Advisory Team and Facilitators noted that an overall communications strategy would have been useful for the CA.

Most **Water players** expressed the usefulness of the process in creating a 'community level' vision on water and the awareness it created for the participants and the community.

Community members: The responses from the community members on how much they learnt about the water situation in Auroville through the Citizens' Assembly was diverse. While the average rating on this was 2.8 / 5, the break-up of responses is given below.
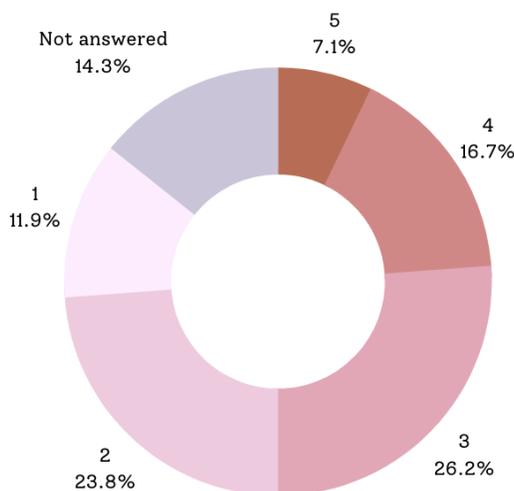
Fig. 8: Community members' rating out of 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest) for 'How much did you learn about water in Auroville because of the Citizens' Assembly process (through watching the videos, conversations with participants)?'

Process

Was the process seen as valuable – by participants, the broader community, and Working Groups? What elements of the process design were key to achieving this, where did it fall short and why?

Feedback from Participants:

On Process Format: Participants were generally very positive about the small discussion group format (which averaged a 4.3 /5 rating), which they felt enabled a depth of exploration of the

topic (4.1 /5). They were generally positive about the small group process for making recommendations for the vision and its implementation (4.4 /5).

On Format and Interaction: Participants generally appreciated the degree of interaction, especially the opportunity to share in pairs (4.1 /5). Through the different formats, they felt that they were able to connect with other participants (this rated 4 /5) – a few noting that more opportunities for connection would have been good, and probably would have happened if not for COVID norms:

> *"More connection with others!"*

> *"Probably would have connected more if not for Covid norms."*

On Facilitation: Many noted the quality of facilitation, and how this supported their participation.

> *"Excellent facilitation."*

> *"The safe space/facilitation was great."*

> *"[The most rewarding part was] To be able to change my mind, thanks to great facilitation)."*

On challenges: In terms of the most challenging aspects of the assembly, participants cited various factors, but none of these were related to the process, which they generally found to be positive. (Challenging aspects of the assembly included: their prior lack of knowledge on the topic of water, concern that the vision would not be implemented, lack of face-to-face presentations (due to COVID), or language problems (such as English being spoken too quickly).

Participants found the process to be the most rewarding part of the assembly. (see section 5: "Outcome").

Feedback from Facilitators

<u>What worked well:</u>

On Interaction – Similarly to participants, facilitators felt that the small group discussion format worked really well in terms of enabling all to participate, and that pair sharing worked really well for getting people to connect. They also noted that group exercises on the first days designed to get people to know each other were good to hold, that it was important not to presume everybody already knew each other.

On Framing – Facilitators noted that theming exercises according to the topic worked well (for example, a pair sharing around each person's favourite water body in this CA on water in Auroville), and that a very good framing of facilitated exercises/activities to explaining why were are doing them, and their role in the process was important (for example, a role play that was

well prepared and presented as an opportunity to explore dynamics around listening and why this is key in a Citizens' Assembly process where many different inputs need to be heard).

On the Overall Process – Facilitators noted that there was a good mix of energizing and introspective activities, and that it was important to slowly build these in so as not to offset the balance for participants who don't find these valuable. They also noted the value of well-prepared materials for helping the process to keep moving forward.

On Team Composition – It was felt that critical to the success of the sessions was how the team (lead facilitators and wider CA core team) held the space by being fully present, curious, dedicated and open to feedback on the process – that the way the team embodied these values during the sessions helped the members realise them too. Overlaps between facilitation and advisory team members were also crucial to informing the process well.

On Participant Support – Facilitators noted it was helpful to let people miss a session if they really needed to, while noting that this was workable given that the presentations were delivered via videos that could be caught up on, and that the work was in small groups that changed each week. It was also helpful to have someone dedicated to following up with participants between sessions with a caring check-in with those who missed a session.

What can be improved:

Support for Participant Initiatives: Facilitators suggested that there could be a regular "holding time" in between sessions that could be used for extra things that come up from participants during the process, for the CA as a group to be able to respond with facilitation support.

External Facilitation – The facilitation team noted that if external facilitators (to the CA core team) are called upon in future (as they were in the first, pre-COVID session of this CA, which was repeated when the CA restarted with exclusively CA core team members as facilitators), they would need to be trained in the aims and values of a Citizens' Assembly process. The CA facilitation team will make a presentation to the facilitator pool on the CA focussing on the facilitation aspects of the CA.

Feedback from Core Team

What worked well:
The top three ideas that emerged from the core team's feedback (Fig. 9) on what worked well in the process were the content of the assembly put together by the advisory group and the facilitator team, the facilitation that guided the participants gently through this experience and the dynamics of the core team (diversity, sharing and collaboration) that motivated everyone to give their best and made the process enjoyable. Other important aspects of the process included the support offered to the participants, having multiple perspectives through video presentations and having the trust and engagement of participants in the process, which was a result of the facilitation and support provided by the team.
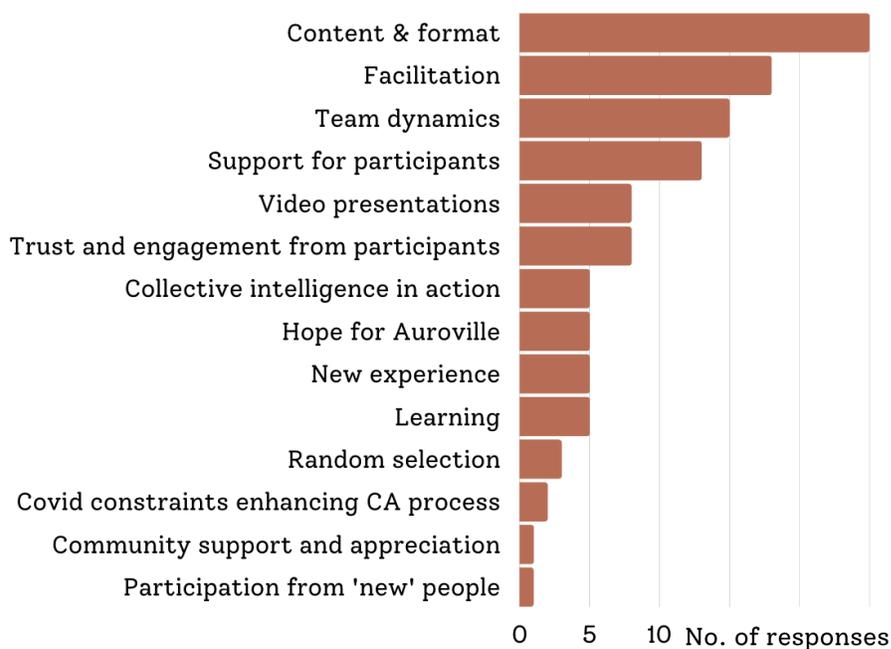
Fig. 9: Core team feedback on
'what worked well / the most rewarding parts of the CA pilot'

Excerpts from their reflections:

"One of the most rewarding things was working with a dedicated, committed, and very lovely team."

"Experiencing the possibility of respectful, informed, caring discussion amongst Aurovilians. "

"At an occult level, a group of people focused on a particular topic will definitely have an impact – changing the energy around it, although in ways that are unpredictable and difficult to quantify."

"I felt the facilitation team worked very well together due to being quite engaged, informed and enthusiastic on the CA model itself. This engagement I feel is quite crucial for the success of future CAs. There was also a lot of expertise in the team that contributed to the successful planning and implementation of the pilot."

"It was good to have multiple dedicated teams: advisory, facilitation, participant support, documentation, budget, evaluation. Also the balance struck between energisers, creative/visioning activities, and content to be delivered. I think the facilitation team should train other facilitators who wish to support CA processes in future."

What did not work well:
The core team observed the main challenge in the assembly was synthesising the final output in the last two sessions. It was felt that summarising the work done in the initial sessions, in a presentable and digestible form, in the given time constraints, may have caused it to lose its richness. Also, since this process of reduction involved a mental approach of analysis, integration and prioritisation, the core team felt that a few participants may have not been able to participate fully in this step. Their recommendations for future assemblies to avoid this are- to plan for the time required according to the topic and the desired outputs, based on this experience, and to include other forms of expressing, sharing and recording ideas.
Not having large whole group interactions (due to COVID constraints), interactions between the water players and the participants (which were optional) and the dropout of Tamil participants, despite translation efforts, were the other challenges expressed by the core team.
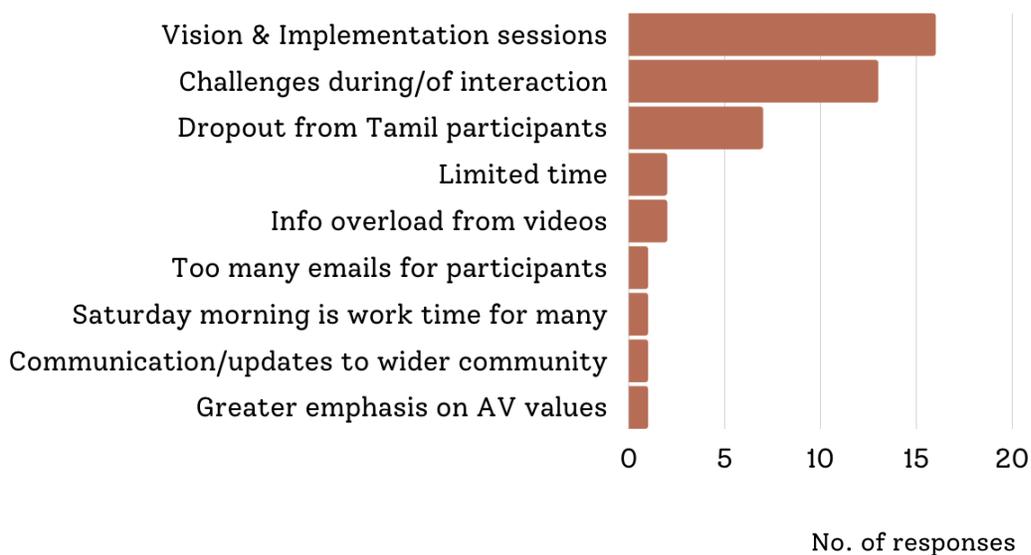
Fig. 10: Core team feedback on
'what did not work well / challenges of the CA pilot'

Excerpts from reflection by the core team on the challenges faced during the vision and implementation sessions:

> "I felt a little uncomfortable with the voting and the rating system at the end. A lot of richness was lost here. Maybe more time, creativity and deliberation could have been brought in there."

> " I am not convinced that the process of final prioritization accurately reflected what the participants think. There were too many lacuna and missing steps..."

> " I think it could have been good if someone (we or others) had had the bandwidth to encourage/support implementation ideas from participants. It might be interesting to trial the CA process with a more straightforward process next."

Excerpts from reflection by the core team on the <u>challenges around interaction between participants and the water players</u>:

> "All interaction sessions ended up being optional. in future assemblies, I would recommend they are mandatory as they deliver a different sense of the space and issues at hand/ an experimental learning/understanding of the challenge."

> "It would have been useful if people in the video have been available to answer questions immediately after the screening."

Excerpts from reflection by the core team on the <u>challenges around interaction between participants and the water players</u>:

> "Balancing the time/commitment of the participants with the desire of a few to have more say in the process – and consideration of whether increased input from the 'vocal few' biases the outcome or not."

> "Having two or more people in the small teams for note-taking/facilitation and translation when having only 4 participants was sometimes challenging as a facilitator. It might have been easier to do it alone!"

Besides this it was felt by some members of the core team that the information in the videos and the sessions' format may have been excessive for some participants, specially due to lack of site visits and field trips (these were originally planned in the pilot but couldn't be executed due to COVID constraints) and that more and diverse ways of learning and assimilating information may be required in the future assemblies.

The Advisory Team observed that more (perhaps non-optional) live interaction might have communicated another layer of the felt experience of the field of water to the CA participants

The **Water Players** also expressed that they would have liked to have more time for interaction with the participants.

It should be noted that interaction time and opportunities were limited in the assembly due to constraints on large gatherings during the pandemic.

Community members: Out of 42 respondents, 34 marked all key aspects of the CA - Random selection, Education and presentation of diverse perspectives on the topic, and Skill-building (recognising bias and deep listening) as valuable. 4/42 marked only Random selection and another 4/42 marked only Education as the valuable aspects of the CA model.
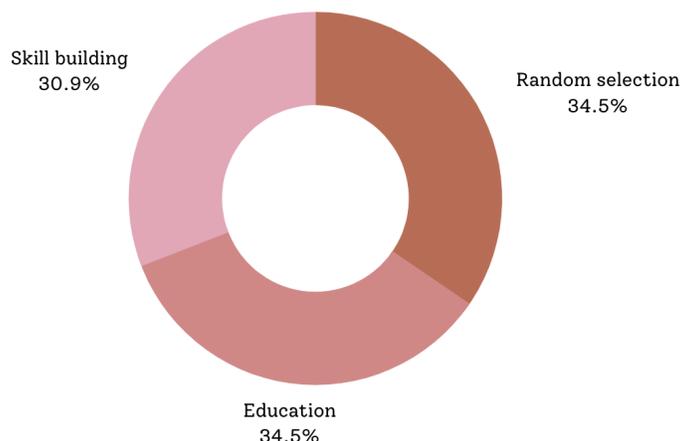
Fig. 11: Community members' responses for
'Which do you find the most interesting/valuable aspects of the CA model?'

Excerpts from community feedback:

> *"I would be interested in seeing how the quality of Citizens' Assembly be maintained (openness and creativity) and not flattened out for utility."*

> *" I would like to see how the 'executors / implementation bodies' become more integrated in the CA process."*

Working Group/RAS members: Out of 10 respondents, approximately half (6/10) marked all key aspects of the CA - Random selection, Education and presentation of diverse perspectives on the topic, and Skill-building (recognising bias and deep listening) as valuable. Another close to third (3/10) marked education as the most valuable, while 2/10 prioritised Random Selection and 1/10 Skill-Building.
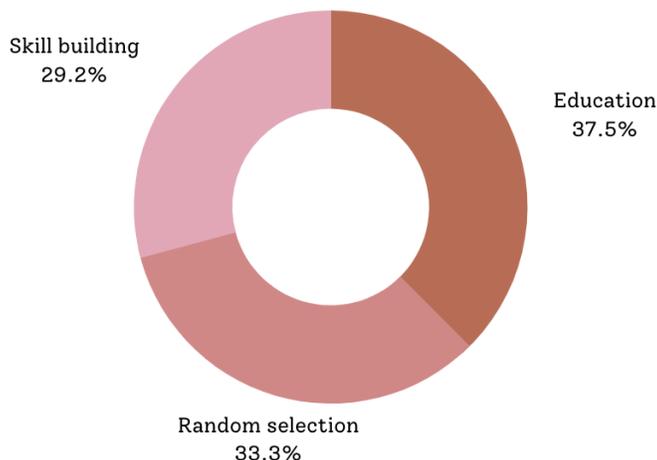
*Fig. 12: Working group members' response for
'Which do you find the most interesting/valuable aspects of the CA model?'*

Excerpts from Working Group/RAS members' feedback:

"From the presentation it seems your pilot project went well. I think it could be a good alternative way to make decisions, give advice and work towards 'unending education'."

"I hope that the CA will help to include more Aurovilians in the decision making processes and to create more awareness around community issues."

"3b [education/diverse perspectives presented on a topic] and 3c [skill building in recognising bias/practicing deep listening] are very important for the decision-making process, and could become key elements of the RAD in future."

The potential of the educational and social aspects of this process were also specifically pointed out in several focus group sessions with the Working Group & the RAS as having potential for transforming the collective decision-making culture in Auroville.

On average, Working Group/RAS members rated the usefulness of the process for follow up by their respective groups 4/5.

<u>Outcome</u>

Were participants satisfied with the outcome (a water vision for Auroville, and suggestions for its implementation)?

Participants were generally positive or very positive about the outcome (the vision and recommendations) of the assembly (6 people very positive; 8 positive; 3 neutral).

Neutral
17.6%

Very positive
35.3%
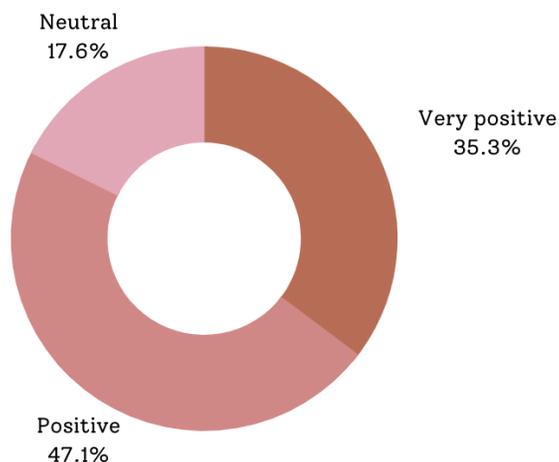
Positive
47.1%

Fig.13: Participants' feedback to the outcome of the assembly

While all participants were very hopeful about the potential for the new water vision to create positive change in Auroville, almost ¾ of them expressed concern about its implementation – particularly regarding who would take responsibility for the vision's implementation.

In terms of what did not work well, participants gave diverse answers, the most common of which was a concern about the need to bring more concreteness to the vision and the ways in which it can be implemented.

Was the outcome perceived to be valid and implementable by the water players?

While the water players appreciated the water vision outcome (4.4 /5), they seemed to have wanted more in the implementation recommendations (2.2 /5) by the participants. The recommendations were perceived by the water players as rather broad with no clear pathway for materialising the recommendations. This may be due to a difference in expectations from the water players. The objectives of the assembly were to come up with a vision and suggestions on steps for ensuring the vision could be implemented. It was not intended to provide a pathway for materialising the recommendations as it was felt this next step would need to be developed by the water players (especially those with technical and governance expertise). The lack of a clear body to take on this work was one of the main areas discussed by the assembly members and several suggestions were made on how this gap could be addressed. However some of the water players misunderstood the role of the citizens assembly and expected the members and core team to take on the role of implementing the recommendations. The water players rated the usefulness of the outcomes at 3.3 /5 and the usefulness of the process at 4.1 /5 , for their work and future work on the topic respectively.

Following are the hopes and concerns expressed by the water players for the outcomes of the assembly on water.

Hopes:

- Collaboration
- A group of committed people come forward to take this up
- Involvement of RA / Participation of the community
- That bold steps are taken and the process moves forward
- That all water players will embrace the vision
- The facilitation team continues to hold drive the process

Concerns:

- That the process will "lose steam" and outputs will not go far
- Responsibility for who will take this forward is not going to found
- That the community/working groups are not as open to receiving the outcomes
- Lack of collaboration/ work from water players
- That parallel processes not following the vision will continue
- Insufficient follow up

Excerpts from their feedback on their concerns around implementation:

> "I like how the vision has been clarified and think this is probably the most important outcome, although... I think implementation is the weak point because there is no clear 'place' for such information to go. I feel that someone/small group needs to be responsible for holding this vision and making sure that everyone, especially Aurovilians, both know what it is and where to go for more information."

> "...based on my experience, concretising any of these elements, even more when combined, is a gigantic task, for which human resources and massive funding are needed. The present people already engaged on water issues are far not sufficient and already busy....This citizens' assembly initiative and its results are a marvellous action. Now how do we turn it into urgent and efficient acts, shared and for the good of all? And how do we stabilise them?"

> "I am disappointed that there were only a few people from the CA participants group present today (presentation of outcomes to water players). Please invite the collective power of the people to present their own work. They are now in the unique position to guide the community as they have heard / seen the overall picture held in fragments by the water players."

> "The question is whether the community will be willing to fund a permanent group of people with the expertise and experience to move forward. if it is left to a voluntary group I don't think it would keep going for very long as it is intense work."

Was the outcome perceived to be valid and implementable by Working Groups/RAS?

Working Group/RAS members rated the Water Vision outcome 4/5 and the suggestions for Implementation 3.9/5, and the usefulness of these outcomes for follow-up by their respective

groups 3.8/5. The outcomes can therefore be considered to be perceived as valid by Working Groups.

However, there were concerns about implementation of collective decision-making processes in general in Auroville:

> *"Implementation is always the most challenging part of a decision-making process in Auroville so it's important to see if this actually happens this time."*

> *"According to my experience, implementation is almost always the difficult part here. I hope the implementation team finds true collaboration from groups and Aurovilians in their task"*

> *One member shared that there would be a need "For there to be some sort of a supervisor for implementation".*

Was the outcome perceived to be valid and implementable by the community at large?
The feedback received from the community regarding the outcomes was mixed. The average rating out of 5 for the vision outcome was 3.75/5, as was the rating for the suggestions for implementation. Many responses expressed that they would have liked to see more clarity of way forward in the implementation suggestions, and that this outcome seemed very broad. The average rating on how much the respondents would like to see the outcomes of the assembly being carried further was 4.5/5 which demonstrates confidence in and support for the outcomes of the assembly (Fig. 14).
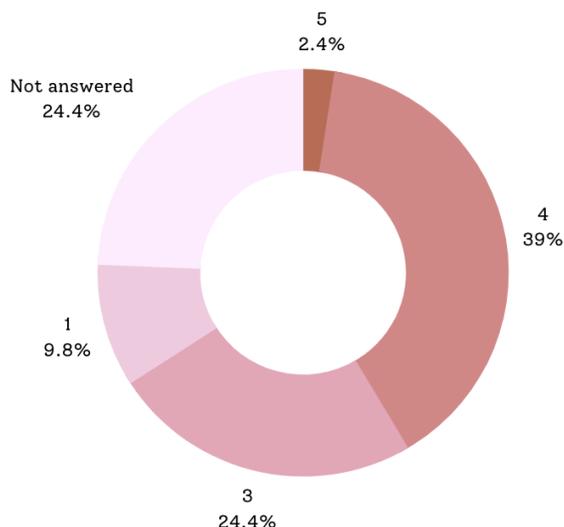
Fig. 14: Community members' rating out of 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest) for 'How much would you like to see these vision & implementation outcomes be carried further?'

Excerpts from community feedback:

> *"The process and vision for CA was very clear (and inspiring!). However, the outcome of the process was less clear. Would be helpful to have a clearer sense of these, also clarity on what the next steps forward will be in terms of implementation."*

> *"There is a need to show some good 'real' outcomes based on the recommendations suggested by the citizens' assembly for the community to develop trust and legitimacy in this approach to decision making."*

> *"I would have liked to see more clarity in the implementation points."*

> *"The outcomes seem very theoretical right now, and I have some doubts about the implementation. Maybe the title of 'implementation' should be changed. It feels disappointing in terms of practicality."*

> *"For me the outcomes are useless and not practical."*

Regarding the gap in the expectations of the some of the community members and the outcomes, the organising team noted that while the topic of the Citizens' Assembly was to come up with 'A vision for Water in Auroville', such an exercise without any guidelines on how this vision could be implemented would have been seen as incomplete. This was accommodated in the deliverables from the Citizens' Assembly without any specific requirement for these by the stakeholders. However, since the assembly was quite successful in bringing different perspectives to the table and careful deliberations with the participants, the process drew a lot of attention and support from the community and with that came a lot of expectations on implementing the outcomes, which was not the goal of the assembly to begin with. Recognising the need for the setting up a framework for implementation of the outcomes, members of the core team have also been helping as part of an 'implementation team' (see 'Follow up on Implementation', p. 47) to liaise with the relevant working groups and stakeholders and take the Citizens' Assembly recommendations further.

Conclusion

"To what extent can the Citizens' Assembly model support capacity-building and participation in collective decision-making processes in Auroville, towards realising its ideals of human unity and unending education within these?"

Outcomes of the Evaluation

Participants

When asked what was the most rewarding part of the assembly, participants did not nominate the outcome (the final vision). Rather, they foregrounded the process, particularly the way in which the discussions enabled them to consider other people's points of view, and as a consequence, how their understanding of others grew. Respondents often emphasised how this enabled them to connect closely with Auroville's key values.

The majority of participants said that they would participate again in a Citizens' Assembly, if they were selected. (13 out of 17 respondents said 'Yes', 2 said 'No', 1 said 'maybe', and 1 left the answer blank).
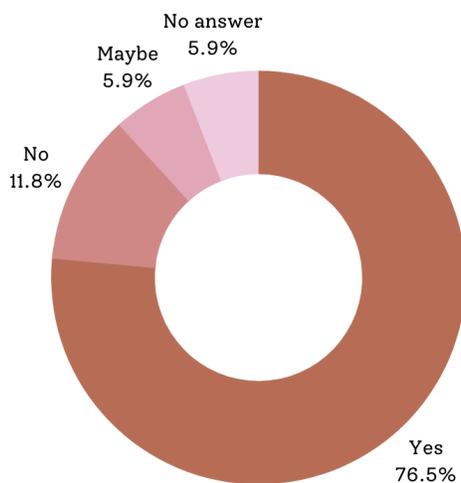
Fig. 15: Participants' response to 'Would you participate again in a Citizen Assembly, if selected?'

The overwhelming majority of participants felt they would trust a Citizen's Assembly process for dealing with other community issues in future (16 out of the 17 participants who filled in the final form, the 17th having left the answer blank).

No answer
5.9%

Yes
94.1%
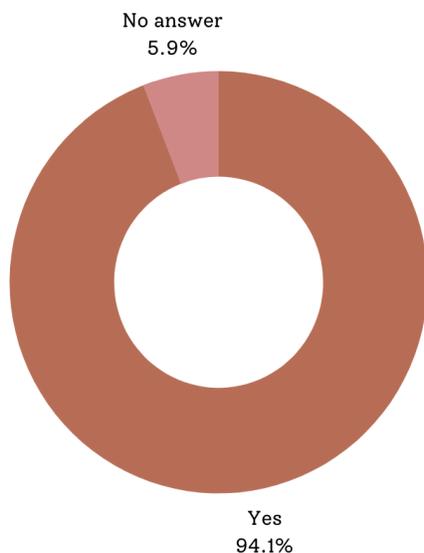
Fig. 16: Participants' response to-
'Would you trust a CA process for dealing with other community issues in future?'

The primary reason given for this was the 'random selection' composition of the assembly, which participants felt removed potential conflict of interest and created a context where all people could express themselves. Many suggested this could become a new model for decision-making in Auroville.

> *"…definitely a way of developing a relevant and responsive community."*

> *"I think this process could be recognised as "undiscussable" because it is fair and free of conflict of interest."*

> *"It is a much better tool than one or two Residents' Assembly."*

> *"YES! This random selection seemed to do the job! Random people, no personal agenda – ONE goal!"*

> *"I think it could be the new model as it is a random selection which connects everyone (not specific people)."*

Participants were largely very positive that *aspects* of the Citizens' Assembly model could be integrated into other collective decision-making processes in Auroville. Some suggested that it could help with education on complex topics, while others foregrounded the small group discussions as a way to encourage people to speak or to dissolve polarities.

A majority (3.7 /5) recommended using video presentations in future processes, for example, providing videos prior to a General Meeting.

While participants suggested many topics for a future Citizens' Assembly, the most common strongly suggested topic was that of the Master Plan/galaxy plan/town planning. The second and third most commonly suggested topics were that of examining the ways in which the Working Groups make decisions in Auroville, and the topic of Education.

In all, the feedback received from participants were very positive.

> *"Thank you for letting me in this process. It really helped me in person to understand what I was doing in Auroville."*

> *"Amazing job, don't let it be forgotten."*

> *"I felt very touched by the work, love and trust, time and energy put forward by the Citizens' Assembly team."*

> *"I must say I was initially reluctant but was immediately moved by the professional dedication that had gone into the process. Every session (except perhaps the last) left me fired and delighted, but strangely nervously exhausted. But all told, it's a wonderful way to depressurise the drive to manifest the city at the expense of human unity. We have the fortune of a relatively small community, an aspiration to govern peacefully and harmoniously, and a bureaucracy that is so far not so entrenched that it is not open to change."*

Water players

The Water Players were also enthusiastic about the CA process being used for other community issues (85% supported this idea). They prioritised the topics of Food/Farming, Land, Governance/Intuitive Intelligence and Economy.
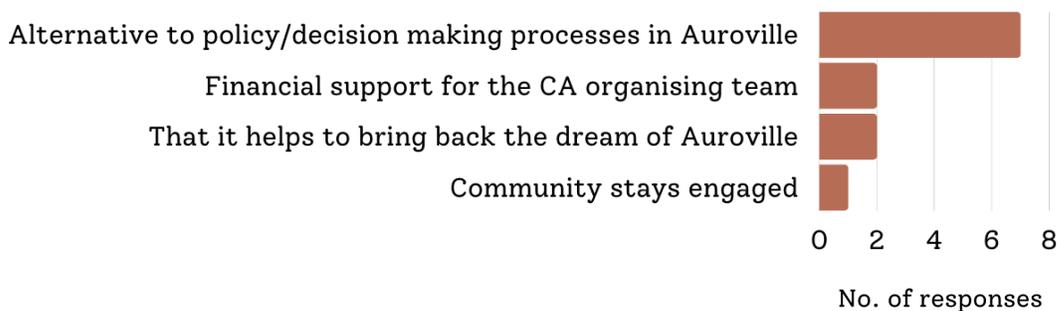
Fig. 17: Water players' response to
"What are your hopes for the CA process in the future?"

When asked which aspects of the CA process they would like to see integrated in the community processes in Auroville, 73% of the water players said 'all' while 27% were not sure.

Excerpts from their feedback:

> *"I hope you find a way to use this method in Auroville. I have given up on most general meetings because they have become too political and don't represent the diversity of experience and opinion here. From what I could see the Citizens Assembly does represent diversity."*

> *" It felt like we touched or pointed to a next level of community interaction."*

> *"I think it was really good how you brought together all the information. I think it would be really good to have more informed discussions about lots of things in Auroville. Often exhausting amounts of time and energy are taken in meetings to clarify situations because the facts are not clear/widely shared. By which time people have gotten bored and dropped out."*

> *"I have no idea what will come out from this process. But it is for me what I have seen the most promising in terms of process."*

> *"I would see it as a repeating process that continues to evolve aside from the 'traditional' working groups."*

Core team

All the core team members expressed their strong recommendation and wish to see the Citizens' Assembly model being utilised in Auroville for collective decision making and for deliberating on important community issues. They also listed the elements of the CA process that could be integrated into the existing forums and processes in Auroville. This is recorded in Fig. 18.
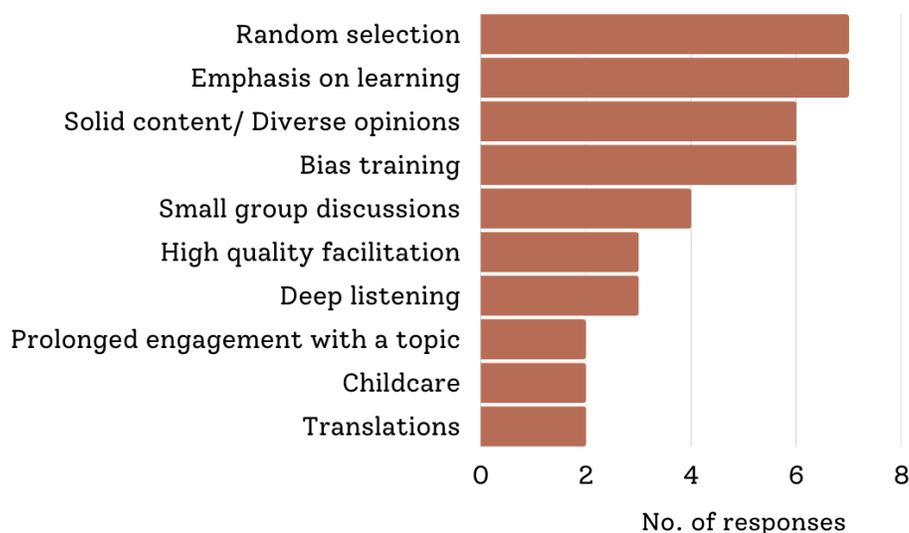
Fig. 18: CA core team recommendations on
'elements of CA that should be integrated into the collective decision making processes of Auroville.'

Excerpts from core team feedback on whether CA should be used in Auroville in the future:

> *"Yes, it is still the most inclusive, participatory and fair model I have yet seen as a possibility for our collective decision making"*

> *"It would need buy-in from key stakeholders for dialogue and post process engagement."*

> *"Perhaps if we find ways to shorten the process"*

> *"Yes, even with challenging topics."*

> *"I think it could be used for pretty much all policy-type issues – either vision/implementation strategies and/or mandates. Not sure about subjects which might require less transparency (if any??)"*

> *"Will it work well for a highly polarized issue?"*

Community

In the community feedback, the average rating of Citizens' Assembly as a model for collective decision making was 4.4/5. Also, the average rating for Citizens' Assembly to be used in Auroville again was 4.7/5.
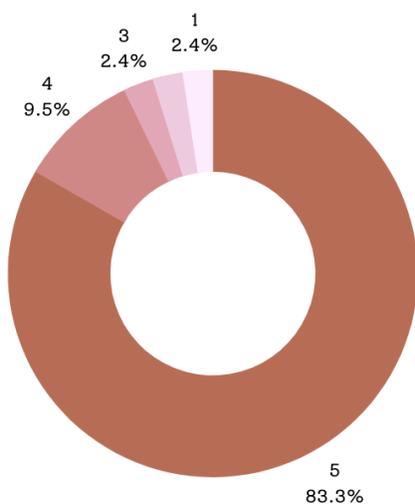
Fig. 19: Community members' rating out of 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest) for 'How much would you like to see the Citizens' assembly model used again in Auroville?'
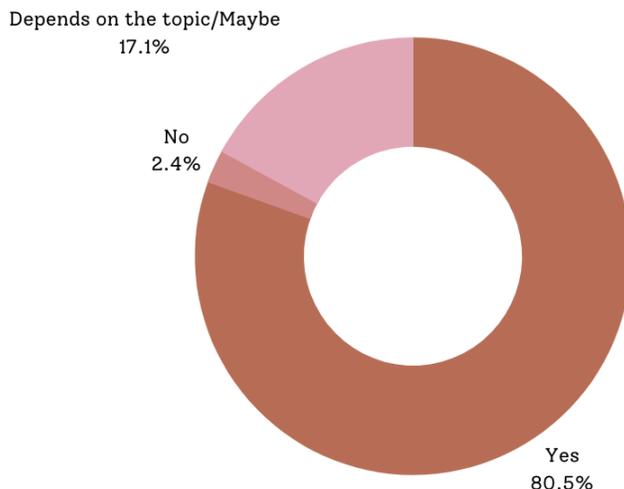
Fig. 20: Community members' response to
'If selected, would you participate in a future CA process?'

Excerpts from the community feedback

"This is a good way to build on the intuitive governance aspect and overcome the polarisation between participatory and hierarchical governance."

"The Citizens' Assembly model could be the answer to some of our structural governance problems in Auroville and help us bring out the best of all of us."

"I like the educational part but I am still wondering how CA can help in collective decision making, on problems like economics, master plan, HT cable etc."

" I feel the next step is that CA should be approved by the Residents' Assembly as a decision making tool for the community."

Working groups/RAS

As previously highlighted, the potential of the educational and social aspects of this process were identified as having potential for transforming the collective decision-making culture in Auroville to align with its ideals of human unity and unending education.

In addition, Working group/RAS members rated the Citizens' Assembly as a model for collective decision making 4.1/5 (on average).

The question "How much you would recommend/like to see a Citizens' Assembly process used for topics that your group deals with" was also rated on average 4.1/5.

During and following the focus groups sessions with CA core team members, several Working Groups mentioned topics that they are currently, and in some cases, jointly handling that could be appropriate for a follow-up CA process, in addition to more general topic ideas (See APPENDIX C).

It was suggested by 3 groups that one or more pilots take place before incorporating it as an additional tool for decision-making by the RA, partly given the fact that the implementation cycle for the pilot had only just begun:

> *"I see the CA model/process as a useful additional tool for decision-making of certain types of topics. I believe it needs a few more to be completed to build understanding and credibility in the community as well as for groups to gain clarity about how it can be put to best use."*

> *"Need more pilot processes to assess"*

Some groups offered concrete suggestions for how they could support this in future:

> *"I believe this model can bring alternatives to the existing pattern of decision-making. RAS could provide technical support in setting up the CA model as part of RA processes related to RAS."*

> *"From the presentation it seems your pilot project went well. I think it could be a good alternative way to make decisions, give advice and work towards "unending education". BCC could urge services to give time for people to attend the CA sessions and possibly give a budget and/or Maintenances for a (or some) organisers."*

Potential topics for future assemblies

We also asked the participants, the water players, the core team, the working groups and the larger community what topics they would suggest for a future Citizens' Assembly in Auroville. Their responses can be found in Appendix C. The most common responses across these groups were:
- Town planning/ Master plan / Galaxy model
- Economy in Auroville / Maintenances
- Governance and organisation
- Selection process
- Mobility

Further Exploration

The goal of this pilot Citizens' Assembly was to evaluate whether the Citizens' Assembly model, and/or one or more of its key features, proved facilitative of a collective decision-making process in line with Auroville's ideals of human unity and unending education. The above evaluation

conclusively shows that this was the case, and the Citizens' Assembly team is committed to both

(1) Explore the possibility of including the Citizens' Assembly process as an additional Residents' Assembly decision-making process

(2) Explore the possibility of including elements of the Citizens' Assembly in existing processes and conducting one or more pilot processes to support this.

Given the concerns raised around implementation, members of the Citizens' Assembly core team have also formed an implementation team with CA participants and water players (see p.50), which will likely inform future processes as well.

Challenges and recommendations

Based on the feedback received, the core team also reflected on what would be the potential challenges for this process to work in Auroville and their recommendations for people wishing to engage with it.

As an experiment to understand how Citizens' Assemblies work, and to explore their potential in the decision making processes in Auroville, the pilot was seen by the core team as successful in demonstrating what works and what doesn't, and in offering guidance points for what needs to be done in order to utilise this tool effectively in the context of Auroville. The core team reflected on the challenges faced in the pilot and listed the recommendations based on experience and feedback, for a future Citizens' Assembly and for future processes wanting to incorporate elements of a Citizens' Assembly. These observations are detailed in Appendix D.

Part II

A water vision for Auroville and ideas for its implementation:

Outputs from the Auroville's Citizens Assembly Pilot Topic

Part II of this report sets out a brief overview of the outcomes of the Auroville Citizens' Assembly pilot with regard to its topic: developing a water vision for Auroville.

Why was the topic developing a water vision for Auroville?

The Citizens' Assembly team put out a call out to the community for suitable topics for the pilot, and the most popular topic was 'water'. How did we arrive at "developing a water vision for Auroville"?

In December 2019, Aditi Rosegger undertook as part of her PhD, a series of workshops with Auroville's water players to explore creation of a new narrative for water in Auroville. This clearly identified tensions between water players and one of the main suggestions from these sessions was that a vision was needed that was wide enough to encompass the various water projects in Auroville. It was hoped that this would provide a common framework in which everyone could find their place, thereby reducing the tendency for individuals to need to prove their solution was 'the correct one'.

This initial step of a water vision is a recommendation beyond Auroville too. The International Water Association notes that a shared vision should be the first building block for any city to become water wise because '*A shared vision moves stakeholders from defending their solutions for their own specialities, to defining a set of common drivers for the greater benefit of the community…It enables people to work together at different scales and across disciplines. It provides consistency beyond political cycles*.'

What was the Citizens Assembly asked to do?

The main task of the Citizens' Assembly was to produce a water vision for Auroville. They were provided guidance on what makes a good vision along with the previous water visions in Auroville as an initial background. Alongside this they watched interviews with 30 Aurovilians passionate about water to get a wide range of perspectives.

It was however felt that the water vision itself would not be enough to make a real change. Very few members of the assembly had been aware that previous water visions had been produced for Auroville and it was also clear that there was a lack of agreement and clarity between the water players on how these vital works are coordinated, funded and delivered.

Alongside the vision the assembly was therefore asked to identify ideas for implementation. These were **not** intended to be fully considered technical solutions, or a detailed/phased strategy. They **are** intended as some suggestions on what the community feels needs to happen

in order to deliver the vision. It is hoped that those in the community with the skills, expertise, decision making powers and resources will then use these suggestions to inform and develop the strategies, plans and projects needed to manifest the vision.

What was the process?

The Citizens Assembly comprised 30 community members who were selected randomly from the masterlist. For COVID reasons the numbers were restricted to 30 participants, and the early sessions were split between two venues. The Assembly met 7 times as a full assembly with three optional sessions.

- 31 Oct - **Intro session and skills building** (bias awareness, listening, setting ground rules etc.)

- 7 Nov - **Context** video (Juergen, Kireet, Tency and Allan) followed by deliberation on elements for the vision and ideas for implementation.

- 21 Nov - **Farms** video (Tomas, Priya, Ramalingam and Krishna) followed by deliberation on elements for the vision and ideas for implementation.

- 28 Nov - **Integrated Water Management** video (Gilles, Toby, Giulio, Bobby and Luca, Nagappan, Dave and John) followed by deliberation on elements for the vision and ideas for implementation.

- 12 Dec - **Water quality** (Lucas, Margarita & Alok) and **Spiritual qualities of water** (Bhagwandas, Jean Francios & Dariya) followed by reflection and deliberation on elements for the vision and ideas for implementation.

- 19 Dec - **Planning and Governance** (Mita, Renu, Sreevatsa and Suhasini) and **Education and Awareness** (Tom, Sat Prem, Meenakshi, Ribhu and Ing-Marie) followed by deliberation on elements for the vision and ideas for implementation.

- *23 Dec - **Panel discussion** with speakers chosen by assembly members (Tomas, Ribhu, Tency, Toby, Renu, Margarita and Giulio)*

- *28 & 30 Dec - **Interaction and feedback sessions** with speakers and participants (Tency, Tomas, Priya, Giulio, Bobby, Lucas, Margarita, Alok, Bhagwandas, Dariya, Mita, Suhasini, Tom and Ing-Marie)*

- 9 Jan - **Developing the vision**

- 23 - **Ideas for implementation and next steps**

In addition, assembly members were also advised to watch the videos from day one of the original Citizens Assembly (stopped by COVID) from Guilio, Paul and Aditi. They were also provided uncut videos from Lara, Rishi and Aditi.

What were the outcomes?

The water vision for Auroville

Assembly members agreed the following as the water vision for Auroville…

> In the spirit of Auroville, we will:
>
> - **Honour the sacredness of water** by recognising it as an eternal source of life, of healing and intelligence and by conserving and protecting all water as our sacred inheritance.
> - **Embrace unity in diversity** by using water as an opportunity to unite and collaborate within and beyond our boundaries; welcoming diverse, sustainable approaches to nurture our land and to sustain all life.
> - **Create a water conscious society** by integrating local and global wisdom and acting boldly with openness toward new possibilities.

This was derived from a more detailed wording of…

We will...
- *Nurture our land to allow all forms of water to sustain all life*
- *Use water as an opportunity to unite and collaborate*
- *Honour, conserve and protect all forms of water as a sacred inheritance which is essential to life*
- *Embody in daily life water as a being, an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence*
- *Inspired by water we will practice diverse, inclusive and sustainable approaches*
- *Inspire a water conscious society that embraces abundance of resources*
- *Integrate local and global wisdom*
- *Act with openness to new ideas*

The detailed process for arriving at the vision can be found in APPENDIX G, as well as French and Tamil translations.

Ideas for implementation

Assembly members identified 57 ideas for implementation. To help the assembly navigate through this quantity of ideas they were grouped into 6 main themes (although many of the ideas have elements of one or more themes within them). The themes are; Leadership & governance (11 ideas), Policies, plans & strategies (9 ideas), Unity and collaboration (10 ideas), Becoming water conscious (15 ideas), Learning through data and experimentation (6 ideas) and Financing water differently (6 ideas).

In the final session assembly members were asked to indicate individually how much they would like to see each of these ideas happen. The star rating (1-5, with 5 being high) after each idea reflects the level of support for each idea.

As stated above these are intended as suggestions on what the community feels needs to happen in order to deliver the vision. It is hoped that those in the community with the skills, expertise, decision making powers and resources will then use these suggestions to inform and develop the strategies, plans and projects needed to manifest the vision.

Leadership and Governance

This was a key theme throughout the assembly. Many assembly members felt that some form of leadership was needed to coordinate water issues in Auroville as this could help to make decisions where there are diverse perspectives and drive implementation.

There were many discussions about the form such a group/body could take but the common requirements seemed to be that it was neutral, accountable to the community, that it sources information from experts and the community and that it is flexible enough to work with and support diverse community approaches.

Key ideas for Leadership and Governance the assembly wants to see happen are:

- Create an community endorsed independent/neutral implementation group to coordinate works & take decisions on water issues, consulting with existing groups/experts & connecting to (& supporting) those interested in water (4.2 stars)

- Develop a transparent & accountable structure with clear responsibilities for managing our water (4.1 stars)

- Create a governance structure with core non-negotiables even while recognising fluidity to enable us to be effective (and need for a balance of central vs local/community) (3.9 stars)

- Explore ways for increased water awareness & management at local/community scale - potentially through community water stewards, mapping borewells, water user groups (3.9 stars)

- Regular facilitated community forum to debate water issues & explore solutions with experts, users, governance etc (3.8 stars)

Policies, plans and strategies

As noted before, it was not the remit of the Citizens Assembly to develop policies, plans or strategies for water, but instead to indicate where they felt work is needed.

Assembly members felt that this is one of the critical areas for urgent action, with a need to understand the current situation with regards to water, integrate water into all aspects of planning and develop a strong water policy and integrated water plan with targeted actions as

appropriate for different areas of Auroville and the bioregion. Alongside this there was a call to identify immediate actions that can be taken whilst the strategic planning is being developed.

Key ideas for policies, plans and strategies the assembly wants to see happen are:

- Prioritise water in all levels of planning - identifying key water zones, reviewing the masterplan with water as a priority & ensuring new development has systems to capture rainwater, recycle water & reduce pollution (ie shared kitchen, laundry) (4.7 stars)

- Map current situation to understand where water is being used in AV & what are the critical opportunities to take/fund/support (4.3 stars)

- Develop a strong water policy (ie community mandated) & integrated water plan - which has clear targets but allows diverse actors/solutions (& creative balanced with technical) (4.2 stars)

- Provide support (funding/skills/resources) for infrastructure/ projects to reduce water use for major users (ie farms) (4.1 stars)

- Identify immediate actions - & provide funding /skills /advice to enable action on water (4 stars)

Unity and collaboration

Many assembly members felt that many of the issues facing Auroville with regards to water stem from the lack of collaboration rather than a scarcity of water. As such it was felt that new processes should be explored to bring the water players (and other community members) together in a way that focused on collective outcomes, especially where there are blockages. Several suggestions were made as to how this could be achieved (such as use of mediators, exploring processes to cultivate and encourage unity and undertaking collective work within Auroville).

In addition, many assembly members felt strongly that Auroville cannot look at its water situation in isolation from the surrounding bioregion and therefore urge stronger collaboration. Again several suggestions were made on how this could be achieved (such as Mahapanchayat, bioregional water plan and strengthening connections with the bioregion through existing channels and collective work).

Key ideas for unity and collaboration the assembly wants to see happen are:

- Explore ways to strengthen collaboration with bioregion & beyond - all levels of governments (as well as villages) - on water, potentially through a Maha-panchayat and/or bio-regional waterplan (4.5 stars)

- Bring stakeholders - experts, users, governance - together to explore blockages to working together (with support from skilled mediator) (4.4 stars)

- Work with & strengthen existing channels (AVAG/Ilaignarkal Education Centre, SLI etc) to engage bioregion in water issues (4.2 stars)

- Support & enable more collective work on food & water within AV (ie community gardens) (3.9 stars)

- Share existing water awareness lessons/good practice from AV schools with schools in bioregion (3.8 stars)

Becoming water conscious

How the vision is communicated - and clear communication around the topic of water more broadly - was seen as vital if action is to happen. Awareness and education were seen as key steps to achieve the shift of consciousness several assembly members felt was required amongst Aurovilians and the bioregion.

There were many ideas emerging in this area, which represented that many different approaches will be needed (using visual, narrative, data, tech) to engage effectively with Auroville and the bioregion. It was therefore felt it could be useful for efforts to be coordinated in a communication strategy.

Key ideas for becoming water conscious the assembly wants to see happen are:

- Develop & test structured education program on water (inspire children when young, build skills when older) for schools in AV & bioregion. Showing the value of water, how everything is connected etc. Could be delivered through curriculum or roadshows. (4.4 stars)

- Provide information in simple yet impactful, digestible, educational & accessible language/ format, applicable to daily life (4.4 stars)

- Prioritise environmental education for all, with compulsory education on water in AV schools (4.1 stars)

- Invite community to respond to vision through inspirational, joyful celebration of water (annual water festival) (4.1 stars)

- Identify peer networks (ie temples) to communicate with bioregion, working with them to understand & communicate relevant issues (ie not focused on Auroville) (3.9 stars)

Learning through data and experimentation

Many assembly members saw improved access to data as a fundamental step to enable informed decision making - both as individuals and as a community. There were many discussions around the need to make the data understandable to those in AV and the bioregion.

There was also strong support to encourage experimentation in water, to ensure that lessons are captured from past and future and that two way sharing between AV and the bioregion (and the world) are enabled so that learnings can be shared - and that AV can learn from others.

Key ideas for learning through data and experimentation the assembly wants to see happen are:

- Establish system(s) to capture & share understandable, transparent, accurate, beautiful data on water (pollution levels in wastewater, well levels, number of borewells etc) which can be accessed by to community to inform their behaviour & decisions (4.7 stars)

- Establish system(s) to enable two way sharing between bio-region and AV - share AV knowledge & learn from traditional wisdom & local programs (ie Puducherry water rich) (4.2 stars)

- Support experiments in water, documenting & sharing information on what works and what doesn't (4.1 stars)

- Actively seek to learn from other cultures (globally), adapting technologies as needed (4.1 stars)

- Establish institutional memory of water in AV by capturing learnings from past experiments in water (4 stars)

Financing water differently

Many assembly members felt that Auroville needs to give more importance to funding water projects, given that water is essential to our survival.

Ideas in this area considered the need for a specific community fund/budget for water, how we could restructure the ways in which we pay for water to cover infrastructure works required and also ways we could act as a collective to drive change.

Key ideas for financing water differently the assembly wants to see happen are:

- Create AV water budget mandated by community - which is accountable (4.3)

- Provide funding for training & work of water maintenance teams (4.2)

- Review options on how we pay for water - potentially a Varuna style water scheme (higher costs for greater use) for funding low water use systems or paying real cost of

water (for full cycle - extraction AND recharge) (4.1)

- Explore ways to encourage/incentivise use of affordable ecologically sensitive products, e.g. collective purchase and/or community-level production. (3.9)

- Prioritise fundraising for communal action through multiple channels (3.7)

Ideas identified as urgent

Assembly members were asked to prioritise the highest ranked ideas to help identify those which are urgent. The following were identified as the most urgent by the assembly members:

1. **Prioritise water in all levels of planning -** identifying key water zones, reviewing the masterplan with water as a priority & ensuring new development has systems to capture rainwater, recycle water & reduce pollution (ie shared kitchen, laundry)

2. **Create an community endorsed independent/neutral implementation group to coordinate works & take decisions on water issues** - consulting with existing groups/experts & connecting to (& supporting) those interested in water

3. **Create AV water budget mandated by community - which is accountable**

4. **Map current situation to understand where water is being used in AV & what are the critical opportunities to take/fund/support**

5. **Bring stakeholders - experts, users, governance - together to explore blockages to working together (with support from skilled mediator)**

6. **Establish system(s) to enable two way sharing between bio-region and AV -** share AV knowledge & learn from traditional wisdom & local programs (ie Puducherry water rich)

The full list of ideas (ranked by level of support by assembly members for them to happen), details of the process through which the ideas were prioritised and additional ideas not prioritised can be found at APPENDIX H.

Follow-up

Efforts to communicate the Auroville Water Vision and the educational videos that informed it are on-going. The suggestions for implementation of the Auroville Water Vision are being followed up by a newly formed Implementation team.

Communicating the Auroville Water Vision
- The Auroville Water Vision has been translated into both French and Tamil.
- It has been published in the N&N and on Auronet in all three languages.

- It has been recorded and is being broadcast by Auroville Radio in all three languages.
- A graphic version of the vision in all three languages has been designed.
- Framed visions of the graphic versions have been gifted to all the water players who presented to put up in their workplaces, and are being placed in key public places (Solar Kitchen, Visitors Centre, La Piscine, etc.).
- Tote bags with the graphic versions of the vision in all three languages have been distributed to all participants to help spread the word. More are being printed to be made available to non-participant community members.
- A meditative animation of the Auroville Water Vision has been produced and is available to all on YouTube at: http://bit.ly/AVWaterVision (english version) | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3p5KFvqn2g (french version)
- A "Water Matters Mela" (festival) is being organised (for Sep 2021) at the initiative of CA participants to invite the community to respond to the Auroville Water Vision through an inspirational and joyful celebration of water, using visual representation, theatre, dance, roadshows for bioregional schools etc.

Sharing the Water Videos
- Information about the videos and where to find them is available on our website: caexplorationauroville.wordpress.com.
- All of the Citizens' Assembly videos of interviews with Auroville's Water Players that informed these outcomes are available on the YouTube channels: Auroville Citizens Assembly and Aurora's Eye
- All the videos have been shown at the Cinema Paradiso in Town Hall (MMC).
- All the footage has been archived with the Auroville Archives.

Follow-up on Implementation

An implementation team (made of a few members of the Citizens' Assembly organising team, participants, and water players) has been formed to follow-up on the suggestions for implementation of the Auroville Water Vision. They can be contacted at: avwatervision2021@gmail.com.

They met on World Water Day (22nd March) with wider stakeholders (many of Auroville's water players, along with some of the participants of Citizens' Assembly and representatives from several bio-regional organisations) to explore the initial practical steps we need to take to move us towards the vision, based on the priority suggestions for implementation that were delivered by the Citizens' Assembly.

This group (of around 30-40 people) used the time to explore how to move forward with these actions. Those present chose 6 ideas they would like to begin work on (sometimes combining multiple ideas) and formed small teams to take these forward. These ideas chosen by the teams for immediate action are:

- Create a community endorsed independent/neutral implementation group to coordinate works and take decisions on water issues, consulting with existing groups/experts and connecting to and supporting those interested in water
- Create AV water budget mandated by community - which is accountable
- Establish system(s) to capture & share understandable, transparent, accurate, beautiful data on water (pollution levels in wastewater, well levels, number of borewells etc) which can be accessed by to community to inform their behaviour and decisions
- Explore ways to strengthen collaboration with bioregion on water - potentially through existing bio-regional partners, 2 way sharing of experience/ideas, bio-regional planning etc.
- Water Matters Mela - Invite community to respond to vision through inspirational, joyful celebration of water (annual water festival)/ using visual representation, theatre, dance, roadshows for bioregional schools etc.
- Bring stakeholders - experts, users, governance - together to explore blockages to working together (with support from skilled mediator)

Members of the implementation team are actively involved and following up on these subgroups, and the Citizens' Assembly as a whole has committed to 6 months and 1 year check in on how things are progressing.

The lack of a clear (existing) implementation body was raised by many – organisers, presenters, participants, community-at-large members – as the key challenge of this topic and outcome. On the other hand, one member of the implementation team shared that they appreciated the opportunity to be empowered to drive this effort; the implementation team was formed following a call to all Citizens' Assembly participants, presenters and organisers.

The Citizens' Assembly organising team has committed to exploring potential and strategies for implementation at the early stages of selection of any future topic.

Hopes for the water sector

Fig. 21 lists the hopes for the water sector shared by the water players in one of the concluding feedbacks. The list provides insights into how the recommendations from the assembly relate to the visions and challenges of the water players. This is being considered by the implementation team in facilitating collaborations between water players and various other stakeholders.
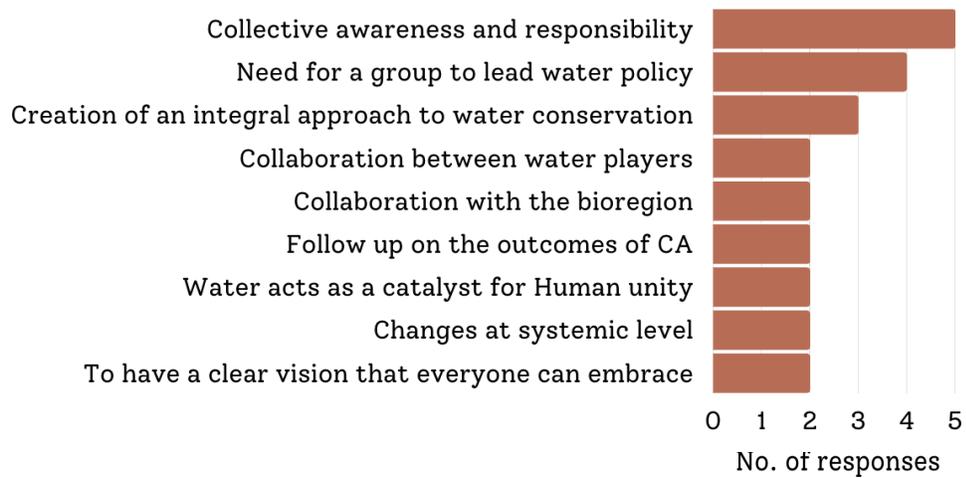
*Fig. 21: Water players' response to
'What are your hopes for the Water sector in Auroville?'*

APPENDIX A: Selection of Topic

Proposed topics for the Citizens' Assembly Pilot

In December 2019, we received 27 responses from the community by email and during interactions expressing their suggestions for topics for the Citizens' Assembly pilot.

In no particular order, these were:

1. Water crisis in auroville
2. Concrete steps that individuals and communities can take regarding the water situation
3. Mobility
4. Motorised Traffic
5. Protecting AV lands and making them productive
6. How to make nature friendly tall buildings
7. PTPS
8. Creating a participatory housing policy
9. An integrated Galaxy Master Plan
10. Use of water in the Matrimandir gardens
11. Higher education for young Aurovillians
12. Creating a maternity hospital
13. WC and AVC Mandates
14. A better accounting and financing structure
15. Maintenances (amount, design, awarding)
16. The word "Aurovilian" to be used as an aspiration, not a status granted at the end of a NC process.
17. Banyan Tree benches
18. Women's Safety in AV
19. Reality far from the guidelines in the charter
20. The gap between the ideals and the reality in housing and private property ownership
21. Instilling the responsibility of being in Auroville
22. Building trust and respect between Aurovillians- the foundation for all solutions
23. Workshops and Publicity in AV, specially using AV name to sell
24. How to make Auroville attractive to young people to join and stay
25. How can we create transparency on personal money and maintenances
26. WG selection process
27. Changing from a commercial to a service economy

Criteria for topic selection for the pilot:

We evaluated all of the above topics against the following criteria, drawn from other Citizens' Assembly topic criteria:

1. Is the topic controversial/challenging enough? (A Citizens' Assembly is intended for controversial/challenging topics).
2. Does the topic concern the whole community? (A Citizens' Assembly is intended for topics that concern the entire population it draws from in random selection).
3. Can the outcomes of the process be implemented by Auroville itself? (The outcomes of a Citizens' Assembly should be implementable by the population that undertakes it)
4. Will it be possible to curate presentations from diverse viewpoints? (A key aspect of a Citizens' Assembly process is the presentation of evidence from various stakeholders/perspectives)
5. Can the evidence related to this topic be shared in the public domain? (Legal and ethical constraints, liabilities and considerations need to be taken into account in all Citizens' Assembly processes).
6. Is the scope of the topic suitable for a pilot i.e. not too controversial and/or complex to address?

Shortlisting of Topics

We found that the following three topics met all the criteria:

1. PTPS
2. Water in Auroville
3. Working Groups' selection process

Other topics did not meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Too complex for the pilot
2. Planning and design problems that need prior support from the concerned groups
3. Proposals for new projects
4. Ethical questions, lack of scope for implementation
5. Not sure if CA is the right format

Finalising Water in Auroville as the topic of the CA pilot

Of the three topics that met the criteria, we found that:

1. PTPS was already being taken up by the FAMC
2. Working Groups' Selection Process was already being taken up by the Active Residents' Assembly.

Therefore we decided to take up Water in Auroville as the topic for the pilot.

APPENDIX B: Role Play

The community garden meeting

Nirvana is a community in Auroville with approximately 50 residents. Two of the residents (Anna and Arun) recently sent an email to the community requesting use of an unused space in the community to develop a community garden. The idea would be to grow local food which can be shared by all community members. Anna is a new Aurovillian in her 20s who is passionate about sustainable living and Arun is a scientist who sees the garden as a good opportunity for a research project.

Their proposal received two objections (from Matthew and Uma) on the grounds that it was a waste of time and precious water. Recent surveys of the community's bore well show that the level has dropped significantly over the past 5 years and there are fears it may dry up soon. Matthew has experiences of living in water scarce conditions in Australia and Uma is a founder of Nirvana community and has seen too many community gardening projects fail.

The other two participants are Lydia - a shy Russian lady who would like to see more opportunities for collective yoga and Jean - a house sitter who hopes to stay long term in Nirvana community.

Anna has called a community meeting to discuss whether the project should happen.

Instructions for Anna

You have called this meeting to get agreement from the community for the garden, which was your idea. You will start the meeting. You know Arun is supportive of the idea and have had positive comments from Lydia and Jean so hope it will go well.

You are 23, recently became an Aurovilian, and are excited to be living in the community that the earth needs. You care deeply about community processes and climate change and the need to do things differently.

During lockdown you watched many inspiring videos on how communities have taken control of their basic supplies, such as food to be more sustainable. You were excited when other communities in Auroville started to plant food gardens of local food and think it is important for your community to do the same.

You are passionate about the environment and care deeply about water but think by working together the community can find ways to minimise water use. **You see others in the community wasting water (not turning off pumps etc) and it makes you angry that people are blocking your project which has sustainability at its heart.**

You do not have much technical knowledge about food growing or water but believe this will come with experience. **You believe that it is about winning the hearts and minds of the community - so want to try your hardest to convince them to see that this is the best solution for everyone in the long run.**

You have previously received feedback that whilst you may try to be inclusive by asking others if they support your ideas you don't listen to them when they reply. **People tell you that you sometimes interrupt them and talk loudly over others but you feel it is important that others see the depth of your passion.**

After all we are facing a climate crisis - and need to do everything we can to be as sustainable as possible.

Instructions for Arun

You are a professor of science who has been living in Auroville since the 1970s. You have undertaken a lot of research on environmental projects both within Auroville and for external bodies, including the UN.

Anna approached you with her idea for the community garden and you thought it could be interesting, so were happy to support this idea. **You would be keen to explore what types of food would grow best with minimal watering. You think it is something that Auroville - as the city of the future - should be doing.**

You are aware of teams that have been studying this globally. They have proven that it is possible to produce nutritious food for communities with minimal water - potentially using wastewater - if the project is well planned, coordinated and maintained.

You would like to share the detail of this research with the group and have come prepared with a powerpoint presentation of just 150 slides, which show the optimum climatic conditions for each food type and the water needed in a range of different scenarios (depending on irrigation type, seed type, soil type, ph of the soil on certain days of the year etc etc). You have also done extensive research into the potential for using greywater and the regulations and systems that would need to be in place to support this. However no-one seems interested in watching the slides.

You find it difficult to express yourself in simple language. Many people have told you that they find your language too complex and technical to understand what you are saying. Typically you answer questions with long, complex, detailed responses as **you feel it is important that people have all the facts available before making any decisions**.

You feel that you are 100% correct on this topic as you are considered an expert in this area.

Facts you might want to share are:

- The COD:BOD ratio in greywater can approach 4:1, much higher than that of domestic wastewater, which is typically around 2:1. Because it is sourced largely from washing activities, greywater is also richer in surfactant.

- Studies have found higher counts of total and fecal coliforms in greywater produced in homes occupied by adults with small children than those occupied by adults only - so if this goes ahead you would not want any more children in the community.

- You particularly like California's regulation on water use for food growing as they consider coagulation, rapid mix, sedimentation, filter loading rates, and disinfection details on top of water quality.

Instructions for Matthew

You have lived in many communities around the world, and settled in Auroville 10 years ago. You work in the school.

During your travels you lived with a remote community in the Australian outback. Due to drought and nearby industrial activities polluting the water sources the community faced several months without water. This was a very traumatic experience for you as you saw a friend's baby die due to lack of clean water. The issue divided the community into those who could afford to buy water in and those who were reliant on the government to bring their supplies and caused much tension and suffering. You would do anything not to be in a similar situation again.

Whilst you care about the environment and sustainability you have been fearful the last few years about the reports on the dropping well levels in Auroville and the bio-region and also the water shortages in Chennai. The idea of wasting water to grow food in the community is highly stressful for you. You do not see what is wrong with simply procuring food from places like Ooty which are still within Tamil Nadu state and have better water and climatic conditions for agriculture.

You keep coming back to the point that it is simply too high a risk to take to use precious water to grow food and feel it is important to share the details of what happened to you in Australia so others can understand the reality that they too could face.

You are not interested in hearing about data or research projects from elsewhere in the world. You feel this is irrelevant to the crisis that Auroville faces.

You are unwilling to consider any proposals that use a single drop of precious groundwater.

Instructions for Uma

You were one of the founders of the Nirvana community in the early 1980s. The community was begun with ideals of creating a strong community that can support its own needs. These are things you are passionate about and it makes you sad that despite your best efforts the community is currently far from this.

Over the years you have given much time and energy to support those who had similar ideas of how the community could realise its ideals through working together in the garden. However every one of these projects failed as people moved elsewhere, stopped turning up to take their turn or started to argue about the small details. That's why the community now employs a gardener. Which is something you never wanted to see happen. The Mother said never to employ helpers!

Whilst you are supportive of the project's ideals you do not want it to go ahead because you know it will lead to conflict and you will be copied in on endless angry emails. You are here for human unity, not to live in a warzone.

Based on your experience you think it is very likely Anna will leave Nirvana soon. You also question her technical knowledge (as it seems to be based on youtube videos).

You are not sure Anna can organise the meeting either, as this is usually your role. **If there is no clear agreement when you are told there are 5 minutes remaining you try to take charge of the meeting** and see if the community can make a decision (preferably to reject the idea).

In general you do not want to listen to any of the arguments in favour of the project because you already know it will be a failure.

Instructions for Lydia

You are a Russian woman in her 50s who moved to Auroville 5 years ago because you were inspired by the ideas of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. You like the Auroville charter but struggle to connect to others in the community because you are not fluent in English (or Tamil or French).

You like the idea of a community garden as it would give you an opportunity to connect more with other members of your community. You think this is important as Mother founded Auroville as a place of collective karma yoga. You do not have any knowledge of sustainability issues and do not fully understand what the problem is but would like to see the garden happen. Also, you used to grow food in your garden at home and enjoyed it!

You are shy and find it difficult to speak publicly in English. You are not sure how to join the conversation so do not ask questions. Sometimes you look out the window at nature

because it is just too stressful to try and understand what everyone is saying, especially when people are talking heatedly. Once **in a while you try to suggest that people speak more slowly and calmly, using hand gestures as well as words.**

You support the garden as an opportunity to do collective yoga. But you would also be open to alternative suggestions for collective activities, such as community projects to save water.

You wish others would remember that this is the main aim of Auroville in light of the Integral Yoga. A couple of times you ask the group if there is a way forward that integrates everyone's needs and ideas - but you find that people rarely listen to you.

Instructions for Jean

You are currently housesitting in Nirvana but the steward has told you he is happy for you to stay long-term as long as there is no negative feedback from the community about you. He is planning to ask them next week. This is very important to you as you and your young family have moved homes 6 times in the last year and it is becoming very stressful.

You are at the meeting to make a good impression on the other community members in Nirvana so that they will accept you. You do not mind whether the garden goes ahead or not. You care about the environment and water but the most important factor for you in this moment is housing.

As there seems to be disagreement amongst the community about the best way to proceed, your goal is to make sure people notice that you have goodwill and energy to contribute to the community, and that you do not offend anyone.

Instructions for Observers

Profiles of the participants:

Anna - Young, new Aurovilian. Passionate about ecologically conscious community living. Proposed the community garden idea but doesn't have any practical experience or knowledge. She wants to convince others about the idea.

Arun - Professor of science living in Auroville since the 1970s. Supports the community garden as a research opportunity. Has done lots of research that shows the garden can use minimal water. Finds it difficult to give simple explanations to communicate effectively.

Matthew - Moved to Auroville from Australia, where he lived in a community that faced drought with terrible consequences. Strongly believes one should not waste groundwater on growing food. Believes water security for Auroville is the most important issue.

Uma - One of the founders of Nirvana community. Agrees with the concept but has seen many such community projects be proposed, tried, and fail, while causing a lot of internal conflict. For this reason she is not open to a new community project.

Lydia - Has difficulties with English language. Interested in the community garden project as an opportunity to practice collective yoga.

Jean - Is a house-sitter in Nirvana who would very much like to stay long-term to secure housing for his young family. The community will decide soon whether he can stay long-term so he wants to be liked by all and to show he is committed to supporting the community.

Your role as observers is to pay attention to:

1. **The meeting dynamics**

- Who gets to speak and who does not? Why?

- Who gets listened to the most/least by the others?

- Who seems able to build understanding and/or move the discussion towards a solution?

2. **Your own tendencies**

- Who do you listen to the most/least, and why?

- Who do you agree/disagree with, and why?

- Do you see any way for the group to move forward?

APPENDIX C: Topic Suggestions for future Citizens' Assemblies

Suggestions from participants:
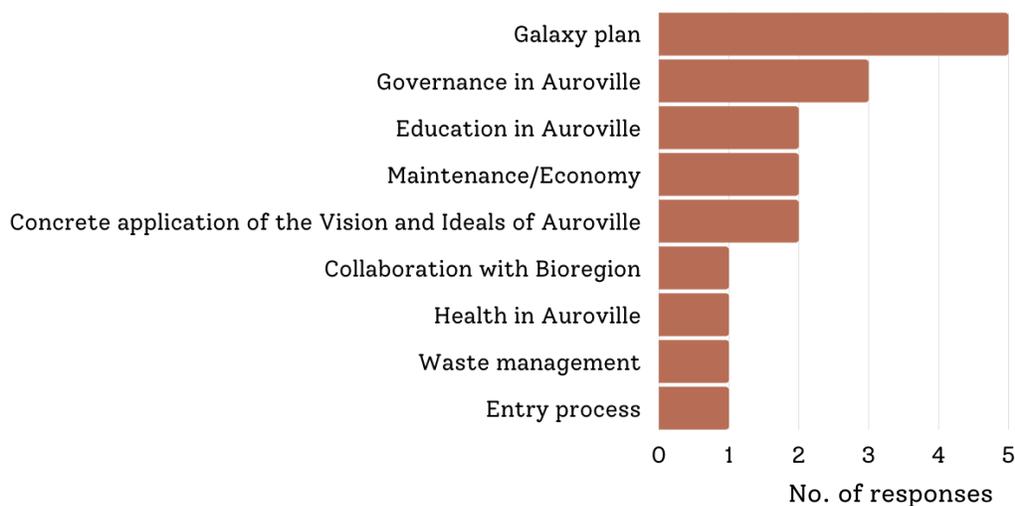
Fig. 22: Participants' response to
'What topics would you suggest for future CAs in Auroville?'

Suggestions from water players:
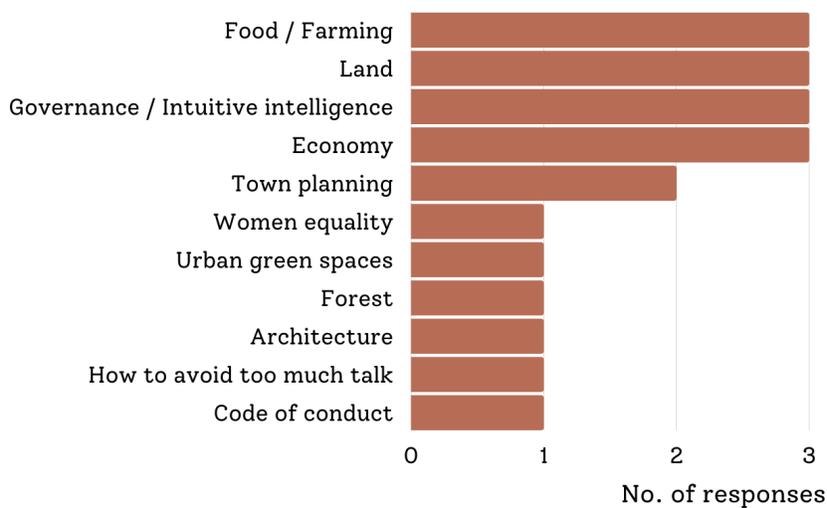
Fig. 23: Water players' response to
'What topics would you suggest for future CAs in Auroville?'

Suggestions from the core team:
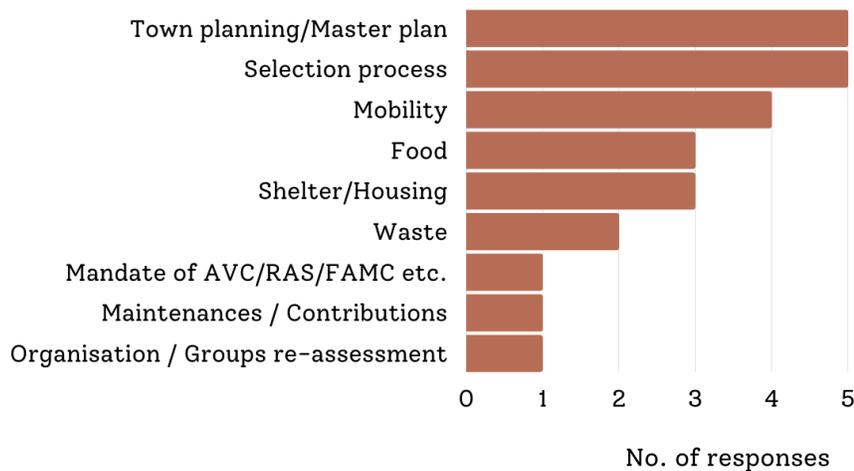
Fig. 24: Core team members' response to
'What topics would you suggest for future CAs in Auroville?'
'

**Suggestions from working groups:**
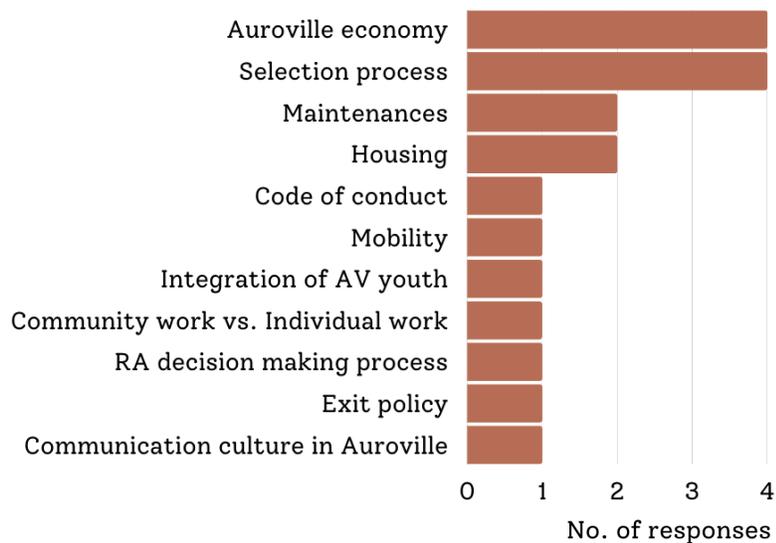
Fig. 25: Working group members' response to
*'What topics would you suggest for future CAs in Auroville?'*

Suggestions from the community:
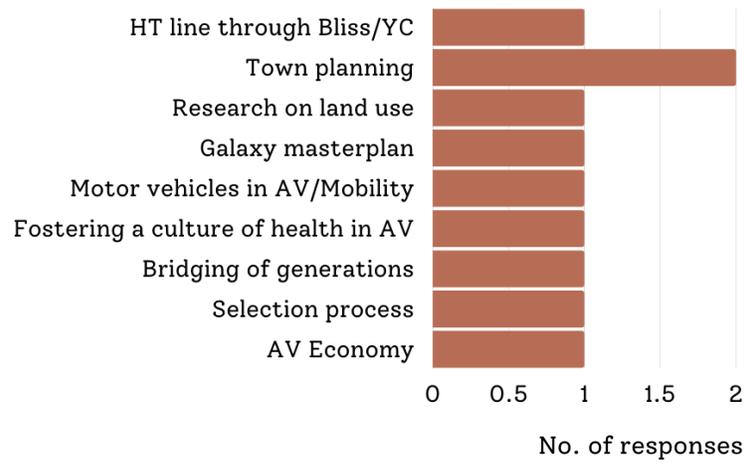
*Fig. 26: Community members' response to
'What topics would you suggest for future CAs in Auroville?'*

APPENDIX D: Challenges & Recommendations

Based on the feedback received, the core team also reflected on what would be the potential challenges for this process to work in Auroville and their recommendations for people wishing to engage with it.

Challenges:

Regarding organisation
1. This pilot was funded by a grant from SAIIER and therefore we were able to cover costs of logistics and videos (which were highly subsidised). Having a budget (see APPENDIX F) to meet such costs is essential.
2. It is important to enable people from different backgrounds, cultures and work situations to attend if selected.
3. Simultaneous translation can pose a technical challenge (like with the simultaneous translation system for the live sessions offered to us by the Unity Pavilion). Getting accurate translations for video translations requires a long process of peer review which is time and energy intensive.This requires a committed and skilled team and a larger pool of volunteers for transcriptions and translations. Not having this support could be a challenge.
4. The process requires an in-depth understanding and/or study of the topic (by topic Advisory Team members), and a lot of hours of work in interviewing, working with the presenters and working on the content to be delivered to the participants.
5. The implementation of Assembly recommendations will likely be a huge challenge if the CA is not recognised as part of our official decision-making process and/or there is not a dedicated team willing to take up this work.

Regarding the process
1. It is important to find the correct balance between providing information and allowing deep discussion of an issue.
2. As different people experience and communicate in different ways, it is important that the Assembly does not simply focus upon mental capacities but also provides opportunities to explore the topic physically, emotionally etc.
3. Coming up with reports, conclusions, recommendations, a synthesis of diverse opinions is likely to require an analytic, mental/intellectual and verbal approach. This itself could alienate some community members who think and/or process information differently. It is a challenge to come up with ways of integrating diverse approaches for the final synthesis of the assembly.

Regarding time:
1. There will always be a trade-off between how much time participants can allocate to attending the Assembly and the time needed to really explore and deliberate about an issue. There is a need for balancing the time required to share all the information, assimilate, discuss and reflect and the time commitment this requires from the organisers and the participants

2. Varying processes will be of varying lengths, however they are likely to be time intensive for participants (and organisers!) as they have to commit for a duration of time to go through the process fully. This itself could be a barrier for participation for some people.

These challenges are opportunities for creative interventions in the Citizens' Assembly process and also for making the process more relevant and effective in the context of Auroville and for the particular topics that will be taken up in the future.

Recommendations:

Regarding organisation
1. To have sub-groups of the core organising team working on different aspects of the process organisation: advisory, facilitation, communications, logistics, evaluation, budget.
2. To secure funding for the CA.
3. Be clear on the needs/objectives/role of the CA with the stakeholders, participants and the larger community from the beginning of the process.
4. Each CA could be distinct and contextualised to suit the opportunities and requirements of the topic. Design the CA keeping in mind the needs and objective of the topic at hand.

Regarding the process
1. Explore and experiment with different variations of Citizens' Assemblies, such as a Citizens Jury, which are less intensive and shorter processes for less complicated topics.
2. Continue with the foundational aspects of CA: random selection, diverse 'evidence' perspectives, building skills for deep listening & bias detection, and facilitated small group discussions to arrive at recommendations.
3. Random selection of participants to be undertaken by or under the observation of the Residents' Assembly Service (to guarantee impartiality).
4. Continue and extend the support required by participants (like translations, childcare and possibly more) and try to remove barriers impeding participation.
5. Facilitation to be done by skilled facilitators who also understand and support the Citizens' Assembly framework. The pilot facilitators could help in training and enlarging this pool.
6. Continue to explore the potential of video interviews in delivering inputs from a large number of stakeholders.
7. Continue with small group exercises and pair sharing as these were favoured by participants.
8. Include multiple opportunities/formats for interactions between participants and presenters.
9. Balance the mental aspects of the process through reflective silent/meditative work and creative visualisation and come up with more/new ways of sharing, expressing and recording information.

10. Collect regular feedback from the participants for the facilitation team to adapt the overall process as required.

Regarding communication and engagement with the Community
1. All presentations to be recorded and made available to the community
2. Process and outcomes to be communicated to the community
3. Sharing participants' and presenters' evaluation of the CA process and outcome with the community
4. Explore the potential of CAs in schools or with school students.

Regarding implementation
1. Define from the topic selection stage a clear implementation pathway for the outcome(s) of the assembly
2. Explore early on who could be the 'holding group' that takes responsibility for furthering the process of implementation once the Assembly has completed its work (could be a Working Group, RAS, or committed members of the advisory team, participants or others).

APPENDIX E: Criteria for Topic Selection

Topics well suited for CAs are likely around planning, governance and organisation - to create clear mandates, policies or recommendations balancing different perspectives and needs that have to be listened to. All proposed topics for an Auroville Citizens' Assembly will be assessed against the following key criteria, applicable for any Citizens' Assembly process:

1. Is the topic controversial/challenging enough?

    (A Citizens' Assembly is intended for controversial/challenging/complex topics).

2. Is there a clear and focused question?

    (The CA model may not be the best utilised for a simple' yes' or 'no' question. If that is the main request from the CA within a complex topic, then some other secondary outputs/recommendations/suggestions should be aimed at to demonstrate the breadth and depth of exploration of the topic.)

3. Does the topic concern the whole community?

    (A Citizens' Assembly is intended for topics that concern the entire population it draws from in random selection).

4. Can the outcomes of the process be acted on by Auroville itself? Is there sufficient buy-in from potential stakeholders? Is there a clear implementation pathway?

    (The outcomes of a Citizens' Assembly should be implementable by the population that undertakes it)

5. Does the proposed question for the CA fall under an unaddressed larger community issue? If so, could the bigger issue block any potential solutions proposed by the CA for this particular topic?

    (Any proposed question/ask from the CA needs to be looked at with the bigger picture in mind)

6. Will it be possible to provide presentations from diverse viewpoints?

    (A key aspect of a Citizens' Assembly process is the presentation of evidence from various stakeholders/perspectives)

7. Can the evidence related to this topic be shared in the public domain?
    (Legal and ethical constraints, liabilities and considerations need to be taken into account in all Citizens' Assembly processes)

APPENDIX F: CA Budget

Budget sheet for CA pilot

Budget approved by SAIIER	109,990
Donation from AV unit	37,525
Total available funds	**147,515**

Budget category	**total spending**
filming	70,000
room rental (verite)	12,000
translation	2,500
childcare	5,000
snacks and lunch	11,994
hall hire bhumika	7,000
printing	3,637
Total spent	**112,131**

APPENDIX G: Summary of process for arriving at the Water Vision

Harvesting ideas

Over the 6 evidence weeks the assembly members watched videos on specific topics and then discussed in groups potential elements to include in the vision. In small groups the elements were prioritised, with each group identifying up to 5 elements for each topic.

The elements were graphically captured in mindmaps each week to ensure that new discussions built on (rather than duplicating) discussions from previous sessions.

Synthesis of elements

Following the final evidence session these prioritised elements were then synthesised before the speaker feedback/interaction sessions in December to remove duplication. This process was repeated once more following the speaker feedback session, where they call for more simplification.

This resulted in 23 elements which were presented to the members in the session on 9th January. These were grouped into themes of: Water belongs to all life, Water as an urgent community priority, Recognising all water as valued resources, Unity and Collaboration, Integral Diversity, Change ourselves, A water conscious/water literate society, Honouring our context and Honouring sacredness and healing potential of water.

Developing the vision

Step 1:

In the session 9th January the Assembly Members split into 4 sub-groups. Each of these looked 2 or 3 of the mindmap themes and suggested two sentences to reflect the elements covered.

The sub-group then moved to the next table to consider the sentences the previous group suggested for those mindmap themes. They amended the sentences, where possible looking to build on the sentiment of the first group but also to simplify and improve clarity.

This process was repeated two more times until each group had reviewed each area of the mindmap.

Step 2:

The final sentences from each group were presented back to the whole group, who used stickers to indicate which sentences they felt were priority and how happy they were with the wording of each sentence.
Results from the prioritisation were:

	1	2	3	4	5	total
Learn from and integrate the experience and wisdom from local and global sources with gratitude	0	3	5	2	11	84
Honour, conserve and protect all forms of water as a sacred inheritance which is essential to life	0	0	1	3	11	70
Nurture our land to allow all water to sustain all life	0	2	3	2	9	66
Embrace water we all share as an opportunity to work together, realising it as a unifying element with no boundaries	0	3	5	5	4	61
Inspire (by example) a water conscious and learned society that embraces a thirst for precious abundance	0	3	3	5	5	60
Align intention and action with grateful opennes to change, new ideas and the challenge of discomfort	0	3	3	5	5	60
Embody the sacredness of water as being an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence	1	2	1	6	4	52
In service of the divine, reflect the dissolving, flowing, purifying qualities of water, unifying diversity of solutions	4	3	1	4	2	39

Results from how happy they were with each sentence were:

	1	2	3	4	5	total
Nurture our land to allow all water to sustain all life	2	1	1	4	10	73
Inspire (by example) a water conscious and learned society that embraces a thirst for precious abundance	2	1	5	4	6	65
Learn from and integrate the experience and wisdom from local and global sources with gratitude	1	7	2	2	7	64
Embrace water we all share as an opportunity to work together, realising it as a unifying element with no boundaries	1	0	1	6	7	63
Honour, conserve and protect all forms of water as a sacred inheritance which is essential to life	0	0	0	7	6	58
Embody the sacredness of water as being an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence	0	4	3	3	4	49
In service of the divine, reflect the dissolving, flowing, purifying qualities of water, unifying diversity of solutions	6	2	2	1	5	45
Align intention and action with grateful opennes to change, new ideas and the challenge of discomfort	1	3	3	4	1	37

Step 3:

The group again split into 4 small groups to spend extra time reviewing the sentences they were least happy with. The 4 reviewed were the bottom 3 (embody…, In service…, Align…) and also 'Learn from…' This last one was chosen as whilst it had a higher overall score 7 people had indicated that they were not happy with it, and 1 person indicated that they were very unhappy with it.

The outcomes of this were:

- '*Learn from and integrate the experience and wisdom from local and global sources with gratitude*' became '*Integrate the wisdom of local and global sources (?with gratitude?)*'

- '*Embody the sacredness of water as being an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence*' became '*Embody in daily life water as a being, an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence*'

- '*In service of the divine, reflect the dissolving, flowing, purifying qualities of water, unifying diversity of solutions*' became 'Inspired by water we will create a wide pool of diverse, inclusive and sustainable practices for all.'

- '*Align intention and action with grateful openness to change, new ideas and the challenge of discomfort*' became '*Act with openness to new ideas*'

Step 4:

This resulted in the following sentences:

We will...

- *Integrate the wisdom of local and global sources (?with gratitude)*

- *Honour, conserve and protect all forms of water as a sacred inheritance which is essential to life*

- *Nurture our land to allow all water to sustain all life*

- *Embrace water we all share as an opportunity to work together, realising it as a unifying element with no boundaries*

- *Inspire (by example) a water conscious and learned society that embraces a thirst for precious abundance*

- *Act with openness to new ideas*

- *Embody in daily life water as a being, an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence*

> ● *Inspired by water we will create a wide pool of diverse, inclusive and sustainable practices for all*

Assembly members then indicated how happy they were (on a scale of 1-5) with this wording for the Water Vision. Whilst the group gave this version of the vision statement 72% (an average ranking of 3.6) it was felt that there was still room for improvement, especially given the guidance on what makes a good vision.

Step 5:

During the final part of the session a sub-group chose to work on crafting a final version of the vision that could be agreed by the group. They used the agreed sentences, the sheets produced by each table to arrive at these sentences, the mindmap and the guidance on what makes a good vision to further distill the wording.

By the end of the session they had distilled the 8 sentences further to:

We will...
- Nurture our land to allow all forms of water to sustain all life
- Use water as an opportunity to unite and collaborate
- Honour, conserve and protect all forms of water as a sacred inheritance which is essential to life
- Embody in daily life water as a being, an eternal source of life, healing and intelligence
- Inspired by water we will practice diverse, inclusive and sustainable approaches
- Inspire a water conscious society that embraces abundance of resources
- Integrate local and global wisdom
- Act with openness to new ideas

However they felt there was still need for further work, so the sub-group met for a final session where they agreed the following be presented back to the Citizens' Assembly as their recommendation for the vision:

In the spirit of Auroville, we will:

- ***Honour the sacredness of water*** *by recognising it as an eternal source of life, of healing and intelligence and by conserving and protecting all water as our sacred inheritance.*

- ***Embrace unity in diversity*** *by using water as an opportunity to unite and collaborate within and beyond our boundaries; welcoming diverse, sustainable approaches to nurture our land and to sustain all life.*

- ***Create a water conscious society*** *by integrating local and global wisdom and acting boldly with openness toward new possibilities.*

Step 6:

The proposed vision statement was provided to all participants ahead of the final session to check if anyone felt that something vital has been lost in the work undertaken by the sub-group (in step 5). No comments were received.

Step 7:

In the final session both versions of the vision were presented to the whole group. Members were asked to indicate (through a constellation) which version they preferred. 14 members preferred the new version and 4 preferred the older one.

Outcome:

It was therefore agreed that the Water Vision for Auroville will be…

In the spirit of Auroville, we will:

- ***Honour the sacredness of water*** *by recognising it as an eternal source of life, of healing and intelligence and by conserving and protecting all water as our sacred inheritance.*

- ***Embrace unity in diversity*** *by using water as an opportunity to unite and collaborate within and beyond our boundaries; welcoming diverse, sustainable approaches to nurture our land and to sustain all life.*

- ***Create a water conscious society*** *by integrating local and global wisdom and acting boldly with openness toward new possibilities.*

The previous version will however be retained - and shared with the community - as the detail behind the Water Vision.

The final version was translated into both French and Tamil:

Une Vision pour l'Eau à Auroville

Dans l'esprit d'Auroville,

- ***Honorons le caractère sacré de l'eau*** *en reconnaissant qu'elle est une source éternelle de vie, de guérison et d'intelligence, en conservant et en protégeant toute eau comme notre héritage sacré,*

- ***Embrassons l'unité dans la diversité*** *en utilisant l'eau comme une opportunité pour s'unir et collaborer au sein et au-delà de nos limites, accueillant des approches diverses et durables pour entretenir nos terres et soutenir toutes formes de vie.*

- ***Créons une société consciente de la valeur de l'eau****, qui intègre à la fois la sagesse locale et globale et agis avec audace et ouverture vers de nouvelles possibilités.*

Assemblée de Citoyens d'Auroville 2021

ஆரோவில் தண்ணீர் பற்றிய ஒரு தொலைநோக்குப் பார்வை

உணர்வில், நாங்கள் செயலாற்றுவோம்:

- நம் முன்னோர்களால் நமக்கு மரபுரிமையாக அளிக்கப்பட்ட நீரை நம் வாழ்வின் பெரும் கொடையாக கருதி பாதுகாப்போம்.
- இச்சிறப்பு மிகுந்த நீரை பெரும் வாய்ப்பாக பயன்படுத்தி , நம் எல்லைகளை கடந்து, மாறுபட்ட அணுகுமுறைகளை வரவேற்று, வேற்றுமையில் ஒற்றுமை என்கிற நம் மண்ணின் பலத்தை மீண்டும் நிரூபிப்போம்.
- புதிய சாத்தியக்கூறுகளுக்கு திறந்த மனதோடு, உள்ளூர் மற்றும் உலகளாவிய அறிவின் அடிப்படையில், நீரின் தேவையை உணர்ந்த சமூகத்தை உருவாக்குவோம்.

ஆரோவில் சிடிஸின்ஸ் அசெம்பிலி 2021

APPENDIX H: Developing ideas for implementation - the process and full details

Harvesting ideas

Over the 6 evidence weeks the assembly members watched videos on specific topics and then discussed in groups potential ideas for implementing the vision. In small groups the ideas were prioritised, with each group identifying up to 5 ideas for each topic.

The ideas were graphically captured in mindmaps each week to ensure that new discussions built on (rather than duplicating) discussions from previous sessions.

Synthesis of ideas

Following the final evidence session these prioritised ideas were then synthesised before the speaker feedback/interaction sessions in December to remove duplication. This process was repeated once more following the speaker feedback session, where they call for more simplification.

This resulted in 57 ideas which were presented to the members in the final session.Whilst there were overlaps and themes between the ideas were somehow distinct from each other.

Determining the collective will

The assembly members then reviewed each of the ideas in small groups to check for understanding and then individually indicated their level of support for each idea. Assembly members were asked to indicate their level of support using a scale to 1-5 stars, where 5 stars indicates they strongly want to see this idea happening.

These individual indications were then bought together in a spreadsheet to determine the collective will of the Assembly.

As a collective the Assembly would like to see the following ideas happen:

Ideas receiving 4 star and above

Prioritise water in all levels of planning - identifying key water zones, reviewing the masterplan with water as a priority & ensuring new development has systems to capture rainwater, recycle water & reduce pollution (ie shared kitchen, laundry)	4.68
Establish system(s) to capture & share understandable, transparent, accurate, beautiful data on water (pollution levels in wastewater, well levels, number of borewells etc) which can be accessed by to community to inform their behaviour & decisions	4.67

Explore ways to strengthen collaboration with bioregion & beyond - all levels of governments (as well as villages) - on water, potentially through a Maha-panchayat and/or bio-regional waterplan	4.53
Bring stakeholders - experts, users, governance - together to explore blockages to working together (with support from skilled mediator)	4.42
Develop & test structured education program on water (inspire children when young, build skills when older) for schools in AV & bioregion. Showing the value of water, how everything is connected etc. Could be delivered through curriculum or roadshows.	4.39
Provide information in simple yet impactful, digestible, educational & accessible language/ format, applicable to daily life	4.37
Create AV water budget mandated by community - which is accountable	4.28
Map current situation to understand where water is being used in AV & what are the critical opportunities to take/fund/support	4.26
Develop a strong water policy (ie community mandated) & integrated water plan - which has clear targets but allows diverse actors/solutions (& creative balanced with technical)	4.22
Create an community endorsed independent/neutral implementation group to coordinate works & take decisions on water issues, consulting with existing groups/experts & connecting to (& supporting) those interested in water	4.22
Establish system(s) to enable two way sharing between bio-region and AV - share AV knowledge & learn from traditional wisdom & local programs (ie Puducherry water rich)	4.17
Work with & strengthen existing channels (AVAG/Ilaignarkal Education Centre, SLI etc) to engage bioregion in water issues	4.17
Provide funding for training & work of water maintenance teams	4.16
Prioritise environmental education for all, with compulsory education on water in AV schools	4.14
Provide support (funding/skills/resources) for infrastructure/ projects to reduce water use for major users (ie farms)	4.11
Review options on how we pay for water - potentially a Varuna style water scheme (higher costs for greater use) for funding low water use systems or paying real cost of water (for full cycle - extraction AND recharge)	4.06

Support experiments in water, documenting & sharing information on what works and what doesn't	4.06
Actively seek to learn from other cultures (globally), adapting technologies as needed	4.06
Develop a transparent & accountable structure with clear responsibilities for managing our water	4.06
Invite community to respond to vision through inspirational, joyful celebration of water (annual water festival)	4.05
Identify immediate actions - & provide funding /skills /advice to enable action on water	4.03
Establish institutional memory of water in AV by capturing learnings from past experiments in water	4.00

Ideas receiving 3-4 stars

Create a governance structure with core non-negotiables even while recognising fluidity to enable us to be effective (and need for a balance of central vs local/community)	3.94
Explore ways for increased water awareness & management at local/community scale - potentially through community water stewards, mapping borewells, water user groups	3.92
Explore ways to encourage/incentivise use of affordable ecologically sensitive products, e.g. collective purchase and/or community-level production.	3.89
Identify peer networks (ie temples) to communicate with bioregion, working with them to understand & communicate relevant issues (ie not focused on Auroville)	3.89
Support & enable more collective work on food & water within AV (ie community gardens)	3.89
Use creative/playful ways to show seriousness of problem, making information interesting, potentially identifying with invisible sources of water (underground/ sky)	3.84
Identify local/targeted actions for different areas of Auroville & bioregion (ie areas for aquifer replenishment)	3.83
Share existing water awareness lessons/good practice from AV schools with schools in bioregion	3.83

Develop communication strategy to bring unity on water & coordinate multiple channels (events, schools, tech/data)	3.82
Regular facilitated community forum to debate water issues & explore solutions with experts, users, governance etc	3.78
Create water 'budget' (ie litres per person/per guesthouse/per farm) for Auroville & undertake regular audits of data to understand how we are performing	3.76
Create central/neutral water awareness/ tech team to provide advice, data, home visits, helpline etc (for AV and non-AV)	3.74
Prioritise fundraising for communal action through multiple channels	3.72
Explore how processes & resources can better support common concerns/wisdom/unity over individual concerns to support water projects (ie sharing resources)	3.72
Organise & undertake regular collective work on water with bioregion	3.67
Create a beautiful, inspiring story/ narrative for vision (story/ theatre/ dance)	3.63
Design a process to taste/cultivate unity (ie challenging people to take opposite viewpoints & learn to love the person you disagree with)	3.58
Create a central water emergency fund	3.56
Improve water education, awareness and participation through learning in action programs	3.56
Create system(s) linked to external bodies & partners, to share information & increase awareness of what is happening on water in AV & bioregion	3.53
Introduce water footprint on products at PTDC	3.50
Explore ways to become conscious of how we use water in our present context & get all involved (youth, elderly, bioregion etc)	3.47
Explore how Auroville can develop a green economy related with the water	3.47
Create single administration/ umbrella with paid position(s) to co-ordinate within AV and with bio-region (ie PVAC)	3.47
Create community water 'gang' to provide friendly advice on water issues and organise fun, tangible campaigns & movies etc	3.47

Create more visual representations of water (ie visualisation of water cycle - black/grey/blue & aquifers)	3.44
Integrate healing aspects into Auroville's water plan/policy - so policies/strategies go beyond just 'water management'.	3.39
Use commercial workspaces & restaurants to improve awareness	3.33
Create film of history of water situation in AV as part of water education in AV	3.33
Increase understanding and awareness of the potential and science of transforming types of water	3.33

Ideas receiving 3 stars or less

Create an action group on unity	2.91
TDC to focus on effective water usage in farms with representative from Green Group	2.78
Give the existing Water Group power to implement policy	2.31

Ideas needing urgent action

The assembly was also asked to vote on which ideas from the top 12[1] were the most urgent. This was undertaken by giving each assembly member 3 stickers and asking them to use the stickers to identify which were most urgent (ie 'should have happened yesterday').

The top 6 urgent priorities (and those receiving more than one vote) were:

Prioritise water in all levels of planning - identifying key water zones, reviewing the masterplan with water as a priority & ensuring new development has systems to capture rainwater, recycle water & reduce pollution (ie shared kitchen, laundry)	15
Create an community endorsed independent/neutral implementation group to coordinate works & take decisions on water issues, consulting with existing groups/experts & connecting to (& supporting) those interested in water	8
Create AV water budget mandated by community - which is accountable	5
Map current situation to understand where water is being used in AV & what are the critical opportunities to take/fund/support	5
Bring stakeholders - experts, users, governance - together to explore blockages to working together (with support from skilled mediator)	4
Establish system(s) to enable two way sharing between bio-region and AV - share AV knowledge & learn from traditional wisdom & local programs (ie Puducherry water rich)	2

Other ideas raised during the Assembly

Over the course of the assembly there were many other great ideas for implementation raised by members.

These were not included in the prioritised ideas above potentially because they were raised in a group where there was a strong preference for other ideas or they were raised too late in the process for full consideration. However that does not mean that the ideas do not have merit, and as such we include them below (not in any specific order).

- Use crisis as an opportunity
- Relationship with water-based love not fear
- We need to walk our talk.

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[1] Noting that the top 12 presented differed very slightly from those in the above list as the sheet for one participant had not yet been counted.

- Include water and food in the larger vision of AV and ask existing groups (FAMC, TDC, Housing) to prioritise water
- Create team to develop blue/green plan for AV & bioregion
- Make plan, then invite experts and ensure governance empowers communities as part of the bigger picture
- Implementation plan to include short and long time scales - to ensure strategy is long term (ie 30 years) to go beyond political cycles but with small steps for individuals to take now
- Need different plans at different scales according to need
- Abolishing city/greenbelt divide
- Get the help of farmers/ Farm Group for solutions
- AV/Bioregion policy for water consumption/pollution
- Instead of a fund to apply for we could have a water loan budget so people can prioritise when to apply for funds
- Have a reward/award system for optimum water use
- Minimise water use in buildings - find funding for retrofitting old buildings to optimise water use and make water audit part of the building permission and project allocation process
- More communication on water - library of case studies, weekly talk show to keep water topic alive
- More communication on the research - maybe collective social media page sharing real time data and public visibility of water resource depletion
- Research Group to support, integrate, educate Bioregion
- Develop & distribute a simple rain gauge
- Becoming aware of forests as our fundamental life support systems and of aquifer/regional difference in hydrology
- Shift perception of clean/dirty water in local traditions
- We could reduce the basic pressure in taps through AV
- Build reservoirs inside and outside AV
- See where water goes in your community
- Focus on basic needs
- Find a way to support our experts energetically
- Moving from 'I' to 'us' to 'we'