



## ***Schools growback after devastation***

Auroville describes itself as a universal city, based on the spiritual teachings of mystic Sri Aurobindo. Situated on India's Eastern Tamil Nadu coast, Auroville has pioneered many sustainable, locally sourced building approaches and projects, including an ambitious school build programme as Auroville Design Consultants founding architect **Suhasini Ayers** explains

AFTER THE TSUNAMI devastated the coastal states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh on the 26th Dec '04, Auroville, an international township north of Pondicherry state in Southern India got involved in the relief and rehabilitation activity for the fishing villages. Loss of life, habitat, livelihood and infrastructure was unprecedented. While many international, Indian, and corporate bodies came forward to fund the habitat

development, partnering with the state government for land and infrastructure input, a few agencies like *Save the Children* focused on the already existing critical issues of nutrition and early childhood development that had been affected by this natural disaster.

In rural India, women struggling with basic survival challenges are unable to take care of their infants and to provide a basic support services to meet the needs of these children the Indian government had initiated the "Integrated Child Development Scheme – ICDS" program in 1975 as a policy response to this crisis with funding from the World Bank. These ICDS buildings along the coastal villages built by the government were damaged and the programs disrupted as the families and staff running these centres were among the affected population.

Auroville Design Consultants of the Auroville Building Centre had been working in the field of appropriate architecture and development since 1987. We had two decades of hands-on experience in sustainable design with projects like the Visitors Centre of Auroville, which is a demonstration project in earth architecture, and the Solar Kitchen that uses solar thermal energy to produce steam to cook meals for 1000 people every day.

After the tsunami we entered into a partnership with *Save the Children-Chennai* to implement a project of building ICDS Centres in 27 villages in the Villipuram and Kancheepuram districts, serving a population of between 3000 and 5000. The project programme had to include the following: