



Government of Puducherry

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT  
PUDUCHERRY POLLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE

# SACRED GROVES OF PUDUCHERRY



## EIACP Hub Newsletter

*(Status of Environment & Related Issues in Puducherry)*

**Sponsored by**

Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change  
Government of India,  
New Delhi

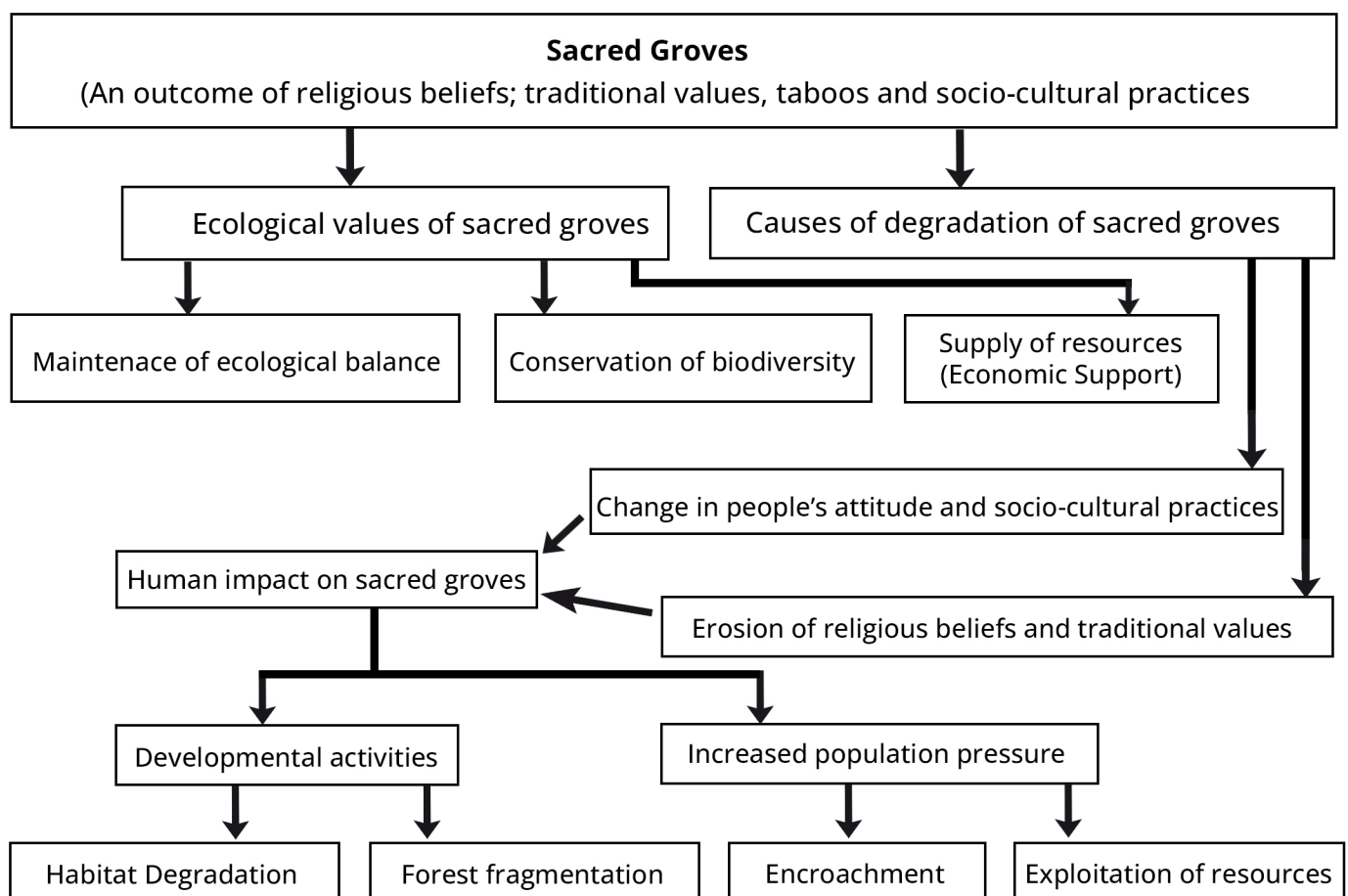
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# Introduction

Sacred grove or forest comprises patches of natural vegetation – from a few trees to several acres – that are dedicated to local deities or tree spirits. These spaces are protected by local communities because of their religious beliefs and traditional rituals that run through several generations. Sacred groves occur in many parts of India viz., Western Ghats, Central India, northeast India, etc. particularly where the indigenous communities live. These are known by different names given to them by the ethnic people. Sacred groves act as an ideal centre for biodiversity conservation. Several plants and animals that are threatened in the forest are still well conserved in some of the sacred groves.

It has been observed that several medicinal plants that are not to be found in the forest are abundant in the sacred groves. Further, rare, endangered, threatened and endemic species are often concentrated in sacred groves. The sacredness, religious beliefs and taboos play a significant role in promoting sustainable utilization and conservation of flora and fauna of the region. Besides, the sacred groves serve to maintain the precious age old religious and cultural practices, beliefs and customs that might otherwise have been lost in this era of globalization and mass culture. Thus, sacred groves provide some very important ecological services to mankind (Amirthalingam, 2016). People's changing attitude, erosion of traditional beliefs, and human impact has caused degradation of sacred groves over the years.



**Figure 1:-** (Source: Khan et al. 2008)



## Tree Worship in Tamil Nadu

Trees/plants have been traditionally considered sacred due to its close association with a deity. For example bilva tree (*Aegle marmelos*) with lord Shiva, neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*) with Mariamman and tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) with lord Krishna. The *Vamana Purana* (Lal et al. 2014) identifies some plants with specific gods and goddess.

1. The lotus, a water plant which rose from the naval of Lord Vishnu, is the seat of Brahma the Creator.
2. The thorn apple arose from the chest of Shiva
3. The cutch tree was created from the middle of the body of Brahma.
4. The tamarind tree was created from the palm of Parvati.
5. The five-leaved chaste plant emerged from the forehead of Ganesha.
6. The bamboo emerged from Rudra and also Skanda.
7. The pipal emerged from the Sun.
8. Reeds came out of Nagaraja, the lord of serpents.

The worship of trees was prevalent among the Tamil as it was among the people of other civilizations. The ancient Tamils believed that the trees were an embodiment of divinity and worshipped them, since the Gods were believed to be dwelling there. The tree that was so worshipped subsequently developed into the *sthalavriksha* of the temple with which it was associated (Nanditha Krishna and Amirthalingam, 2014). *Sthalavriksha* thus means the “tree of the sacred place”. Many places are named after the *vriksha*. For example, Thillai (Chidambaram) is derived from the *tillai* tree (*Excoecaria agallocha*, the mangrove). Similarly, the *kadamba* (*Anthocephalus cadamba*) of Madurai, *jambu* (*Syzygium cumini*) of Thiruvanaikaval, *venu* (Bamboo) of Tiruvetkalam, *rice* (nel) Tirunelveli, *mullai* (*Jasminum auriculatum*) of Mullaivayil, and *nelli* (*Phyllanthus emblica*) of Thirunellikka are the *vriksha* after which the *sthalams* have been named. Several plant and animal species have been saved from extinction due to these sacred places, while many rare and endangered plants are yet to be studied for their curative properties.

## Sacred Groves/Sacred Forests

Sacred Groves are usually called ‘remnants of natural forest patches’ and are the repositories of diversity of flora and fauna conserved by the local communities in a sustainable manner. The sacred groves vary immensely in size. Some contain only a few trees while others are hundreds of acres in size. Some form part of large forested areas while others exist as islands in open plains or deserts. The sacred groves are closely linked to the local communities and various endogamous groups.

In India, the sacred groves are still in the process of being documented. The number of sacred groves in the country may be as high as 100,000 to 150,000 (Malhotra, 1998). C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre has so far documented a total of 10,377 sacred groves which have been authenticated.



**Figure 2:- Distribution of Sacred Groves in India**  
Source: [http://cpreecevis.nic.in/Database/Groves\\_811.aspx](http://cpreecevis.nic.in/Database/Groves_811.aspx)

## Sacred Groves of Puducherry

The sacred groves in Puducherry are locally known as “*Kovil Kadugal*” and “*Kavu*”. Around 123 patches of sacred groves varying in size from 0.2 to 5.0 ha around the temples have been documented (Table 1) in the Union Territory of Puducherry (CPREEC ENVIS). Aiyanar, Pachaivazhiamman, Poraiyathamman, Celliamman, Kaliasman and Maduraiveeran are some of the deities to whom these groves are dedicated. The commonly found plant species are *Albizia lebbek* (lebbek), *Atalantia monophylla* (Indian atalantia), *Azadirachta indica* (neem), *Capparis spinosa* (caper bush), *Carissa spinarum* (bush plum), *Cassia fistula* (Indian-laburnum), and *Syzygium cumini* (Indian black plum) (Ramujam et al., 2007).

These sacred groves are often dedicated to local spirits or deities and as such the people attach sanctity to them. Religious practices and cultural traditions have been spun around them to deter people from exploiting the biodiversity contained within them. Apart from Karaikal, Puducherry and Yanam, Mahe occupies a unique geographical location, which is a part of the Western Ghats. There are about 19 Sacred Groves in Mahe (Sasikala et al., 2014) and a few temples near Korangi / Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary in Yanam.



**Table 1 – Sacred Groves of Puducherry (Source: Krishnan V, 2004).**

S.No.	Sacred Grove Name	Name of the Deity	Area (ha)	Latitude	Longitude
1.	Kothapurinatham	Aiyanar	1.00	11.9352° N	79.6699° E
2.	Abeshagapakkam	Maduraiveeran	0.70	11.8673° N	79.7750° E
3.	Agaram	Aiyanar	0.30	11.9332° N	79.7389° E
4.	Aranganoor	Aiyanar	1.50	11.8354° N	79.7498° E
5.	Arumbathapuram	Aiyanar	0.20	11.9207° N	79.7722° E
6.	Bahoor	Pillayar	0.40	11.8050° N	79.7438° E
7.	Bahoor	Aiyanar	2.40	11.8132° N	79.7457° E
8.	Cettipattu	Aiyanar	0.80	12.0115° N	79.6392° E
9.	Chellipettu	Aiyanar	1.50	12.0187° N	79.6418° E
10.	Edayarpalayam	Sivalingam	0.40	11.8737° N	79.7975° E
11.	Edayarpalayam	Aiyanar	0.50	11.8773° N	79.7919° E
12.	Ellaipillaichavady	Aiyanar	0.20	11.9364° N	79.8076° E
13.	Embelam	Aiyanar	0.75	11.8750° N	79.7147° E
14.	Eripakkam	Poraiyathamman	3.00	11.8781° N	79.6474° E
15.	Erulansandai	Aiyanar	0.80	11.7982° N	79.72642° E
16.	Iyyan Kuttipalayam	Aiyanar	0.70	11.9387° N	79.7733° E
17.	K.Manaveli	Aiyanar	1.30	11.9926° N	79.6600° E
18.	Kaduvanur	Aiyanar	0.60	11.8146° N	79.7082° E
19.	Kalmandapam	Aiyanar	0.70	11.8669° N	79.6474° E
20.	Kambilikarankuppam	Aiyanar	2.20	11.8562° N	79.7211° E
21.	Kanniakovil	Pachaivazhiamman	0.75	11.7969° N	79.7722° E
22.	Kanuvapet (Villianur)	Aiyanar	1.00	11.9069° N	79.7592° E
23.	Karaiyanputhur	Aiyanar	0.70	11.8221° N	79.6530° E
24.	Karasur	Aiyanar	0.60	11.9810° N	79.7405° E
25.	Karasur (KS)	Pachaivazhiamman	0.25	11.9877° N	79.7386° E
26.	Karikalampakkam	Aiyanar	0.30	11.8593° N	79.7484° E
27.	Kariyamanikkam	Aiyanar	0.70	11.8775° N	79.6306° E
28.	Karuvadikuppam	Aiyanar	0.60	11.9784° N	79.7398° E
29.	Katterikuppam	Aiyanar	0.90	12.0012° N	79.7008° E

## Sacred Groves of Puducherry

S.No.	Sacred Grove Name	Name of the Deity	Area (ha)	Latitude	Longitude
30.	Shanmugapuram	Aiyanar	0.70	13.1406° N	80.1804° E
31.	Sembipalayam	Aiyanar	1.00	11.0095° N	77.2361° E
32.	Sembadavarpettai	Aiyanar	0.80	11.8607° N	79.6389° E
33.	Seliamedu	Aiyanar	0.70	11.8273° N	79.7582° E
34.	Sedarapet (ST)	Aiyanar	0.23	12.0001° N	79.7484° E
35.	Sarathambal Nagar	Aiyanar	0.30	11.9371° N	79.8042° E
36.	Sanniasikuppam	Aiyanar	1.20	11.9404° N	79.6376° E
37.	Sanniasikuppam	Selliamman	1.00	11.9400° N	79.6493° E
38.	Sadhikuppam (SK)	Neelavazhiamman	1.12	11.8997° N	79.7764° E
39.	Ramanathapuram (RP)	Aiyanar	0.66	11.9545° N	79.7192° E
40.	Puranasingupalayam	Aiyanar	0.60	11.9505° N	79.6349° E
41.	Poraiyur	Aiyanar	1.20	11.9318° N	79.7477° E
42.	Pooranankuppam	Aiyanar	1.45	11.8728° N	79.8101° E
43.	Pillaiyarkuppam	Aiyanar	2.70	11.8153° N	79.7764° E
44.	Pillaichavadi	Aiyanar	0.40	12.0096° N	79.8549° E
45.	Pichaveerampet	Aiyanar	1.00	11.9307° N	79.7737° E
46.	Perungalore	Aiyanar	0.50	11.8817° N	79.7561° E
47.	Periya Arachikuppam	Aiyanar	0.30	11.7848° N	79.7498° E
48.	Pannithittu	Kaliyamman	0.60	11.8260° N	79.8003° E
49.	Pandashozhanallur	Aiyanar	0.80	11.8556° N	79.6474° E
50.	Oraliyampet	Aiyanar	0.20	11.9282° N	79.8181° E
51.	Odiyampattu	Aiyanar	0.30	11.9054° N	79.7764° E
52.	Keezhur	Aiyanar	1.00	11.8843° N	79.6766° E
53.	Kirumampakkam	Aiyanar	0.50	11.8214° N	79.7830° E
54.	Kobalankadai	Kali Amman	0.40	11.9373° N	79.7719° E
55.	Kombakkam	Aiyanar	0.30	11.9085° N	79.7907° E
56.	Koodapakkam	Aiyanar	0.50	11.93479° N	79.7291° E
57.	Koonichampattu	Aiyanar	0.40	12.0070° N	79.6306° E
58.	Korkadu	Anjaneyar	0.40	11.8847° N	79.7530° E



## Sacred Groves of Puducherry

S.No.	Sacred Grove Name	Name of the Deity	Area (ha)	Latitude	Longitude
59.	Korkadu	Periyapalayathuamman	1.00	11.8794° N	79.7419° E
60.	Kottaimedu (Ariankuppam)	Aiyanar	0.20	11.9098° N	79.7537° E
61.	Kudiyiruppupalayam	Aiyanar	1.00	11.8186° N	79.7498° E
62.	Kuruvappanaikkanpalayam	Aiyanar	0.50	11.4656° N	77.6895° E
63.	Kuruvinatham	Aiyanar	0.40	11.7959° N	79.73210° E
64.	Lawspet	Aiyanar	0.45	11.9550° N	79.8188° E
65.	Madhagadipet	Aiyanar	1.00	11.9115° N	79.6362° E
66.	Manalipettu	Aiyanar	0.60	12.0274° N	79.6285° E
67.	Manappattu	Aiyanar	1.20	11.8003° N	79.7890° E
68.	Manaveli (Ariyankuppam)	Aiyanar	1.00	11.8889° N	79.8063° E
69.	Manaveli (Embalam)	Aiyanar	1.25	11.8750° N	79.7147° E
70.	Manaveli (Villianur)	Aiyanar	0.50	11.9106° N	79.7586° E
71.	Mangalam (MM)	Aiyanar	0.96	11.8927° N	79.7372° E
72.	Melparikkalpattu	Aiyanar	0.40	11.7918° N	79.7484° E
73.	Melsathamangalam	Aiyanar	0.40	11.8858° N	79.7163° E
74.	Mettuppalayam (Uzhavarpet)	Aiyanar	0.80	11.9563° N	79.7820° E
75.	Molapakkam	Aiyanar	0.80	11.8813° N	79.6179° E
76.	Moorthikuppam	Aiyanar	0.30	11.7911° N	79.7883° E
77.	Muthiraiyarpalayam	Aiyanar	0.70	11.9424° N	79.7815° E
78.	Nallavadu	Aiyanar	3.80	11.8546° N	79.8115° E
79.	Nallur	Aiyanar	0.80	11.9044° N	79.6348° E
80.	Nattamedu (Embalam) (NM)	Aiyanar	1.50	11.8750° N	79.7147° E
81.	Nettappakkam	Aiyanar	1.00	11.8625° N	79.6342° E
82.	Nonankuppam	Aiyanar	0.80	11.8851° N	79.8003° E
83.	Silkaripalayam (SL)	Aiyanar	0.75	11.9392° N	79.6270° E
84.	Sivaranthagam	Aiyanar	0.60	11.8914° N	79.7035° E
85.	Solai Nagar	Aiyanar	0.50	11.9548° N	79.8388° E
86.	Sompattu	Aiyanar	0.40	11.9752° N	79.6281° E
87.	Sooramangalam	Aiyanar	2.00	11.8888° N	79.6306° E

## Sacred Groves of Puducherry

S.No.	Sacred Grove Name	Name of the Deity	Area (ha)	Latitude	Longitude
88.	Sorappattu	Aiyanar	0.60	11.9574° N	79.6586° E
89.	Sorankuppam	Aiyanar	1.45	11.7912° N	79.7304° E
90.	Sorankuppam	Aiyanar	2.50	11.7856° N	79.7301° E
91.	Suthukkeni	Aiyanar	0.80	12.0143° N	79.6755° E
92.	Thanampalayam	Aiyanar	0.45	11.8609° N	79.7933° E
93.	Thanikuppam	Aiyanar	0.70	11.8699° N	79.7316° E
94.	Thattanchavadi (Gorimedu)	Aiyanar	0.40	11.9561° N	79.7943° E
95.	Thattanchavadi (Villianoor)	Aiyanar	0.80	11.9106° N	79.7586° E
96.	Thavalakuppam	Aiyanar	0.70	11.8687° N	79.8009° E
97.	Thengaithittu	Aiyanar	0.50	11.9084° N	79.8151° E
98.	Thirukanji	Viswanathar	0.80	11.8866° N	79.7638° E
99.	Thirukkanur	Aiyanar	0.90	11.9957° N	79.6306° E
100.	Thirupanampakkam	Aiyanar	0.40	11.8076° N	79.7204° E
101.	Tollgate Kanniakoil	Pachaivazhiamman	0.50	11.7986° N	79.7791° E
102.	Ulaivaykkal	Aiyanar	0.40	11.9257° N	79.7369° E
103.	Usudu	Aiyanar	0.30	11.9577° N	79.7456° E
104.	Vadhanoor	Aiyanar	0.60	11.9708° N	79.6371° E
105.	Vambupattu	Aiyanar	1.20	11.9822° N	79.6682° E
106.	Velrampattu	Aiyanar	0.80	11.9106° N	79.8031° E
107.	Villianoor Kasanthoppu	Eswaran	2.50	11.9160° N	79.7559° E
108.	Vinayagampattu	Aiyanar	0.70	11.9523° N	79.6755° E

These Sacred Groves are taken from the CPREEC EIACP website ([http://www.cpreecenvis.nic.in/Database/Puducherry\\_903.aspx](http://www.cpreecenvis.nic.in/Database/Puducherry_903.aspx)) from which, it is modified with the current coordinates. Many plants and animals have great significance and are considered sacred because of their association with deities. In India conservation of plants and animals by indigenous people is very common. Sacred groves are example of such conservation. The degradation of sacred groves in the form of loss of species and loss of rich cultural heritage of area should be prevented by proper conservation and protection of such areas. People involved in the conservation of sacred groves should be encouraged and incentives should be provided to them.



## Conclusion

Sacred groves are repositories of rare and endemic species and reserve of unique gene pool. It is clear that, this sacred grove cannot be preserved based only on spiritual belief. From time immemorial, sacred groves are considered as virgin forests with rich biodiversity and even local indigenous population abstain from felling logs or collection of fallen leaves, fruits, vegetables or clearing of bushes. There is a general belief that all the flora and fauna in the vicinity of the sacred grove belong to the deity and it is a taboo that if they are disturbed it will bring natural hazards and a bad omen. Puducherry is no different in this phenomenon. Yet, due to continuous clearance of forest land for cultivation and permanent settlements, there is constant disturbance to these sacred groves.

Local indigenous population have immense knowledge about the flora and fauna in their sacred grove, yet, for better lifestyle, they abandon those areas and migrate towards cities. The steps must be taken to increase awareness among the visitors, villagers and communities living nearby regarding the importance and relevance of conservation of sacred groves. Sacred grove conservation programmes may be initiated in consultation with the scientists, local people, administrative bodies, NGOs etc. More awareness is the need of the hour to protect and conserve these Sacred Groves in Puducherry as they are the treasure of biodiversity and a Mini Biosphere reserve.

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## Acknowledgement

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## Environment Events

July - Sep, 2023

PUDUCHERRY  
EIACP HUB

### Van Mahotsav Event

Puducherry EIACP Hub organized Mission LiFE awareness programme at Sri Rahavendirar High School, Kurumbapet on 06.07.2023 and also conducted Inter-School Skit competition, Pledge & Tree Plantation on the occasion of Van Mahotsav.



### Webinar on Adopt Sustainable Food Systems

Puducherry EIACP Hub conducted webinar on "Circular Economy approach in food system through repurposing food waste" under Mission LiFE theme "Adopt Sustainable Food Systems" on 07.07.2023. Nearly 150 participants were participate through digitally and physically.





## Mission LiFE Programme

Puducherry EIACP Hub conducted mass awareness campaign on Mission LiFE at different schools in Puducherry. The details are as follows:

Sl. No.	Date	Name of the School	No. of Participants
1.	03.07.2023	St. Ann's Govt. Aided High School, Puducherry.	80
2.	05.07.2023	Community Service Scheme (CSS) Coordinators - Government School Teachers held at Directorate of School Education, Puducherry.	53
3.	06.07.2023	Sri Rahavendirar High School, Kurumbapet, Puducherry	60
4.	10.07.2023	Government High School, Kalmandapam, Puducherry	104
5.	11.07.2023	Artchouna Soupraya Naikar Government High School, Mudaliarpet	310
6.	18.07.2023	Viduthalaiveerar R. Seenuvasan Government High School	86
7.	27.07.2023	Subramania Bharathiar Govt. Girls Higher Sec. School, Puducherry	410





## Village Sensitization Programmes: Thirukanji Eri, Villianur

Department of Science, Technology & Environment, Govt. of Puducherry & Puducherry EIACP PC Hub jointly with District Rural Development Agency, Puducherry conducted Village Sensitization Programmes under Mission LiFE at Thirukanji Eri, Villianur on 19.07.2023. A total of 450 rural people were participated in the said sensitization programme. The participants were sensitized on the Mission LiFE Theme i.e. Save Water, Say No to single use plastic & Waste reduced. Experts from Keep Namma Pondy Clean Organisation briefed the Mission LiFE themes and explained the effective measures to reduce waste. Adoption of One Day One Habit for better Lifestyle under Mission Life Theme were highlighted during the programme. The cleanliness drive was also carried out near the Lake side of the said location. All the participants took LiFE Pledge to adopt environment friendly habits.



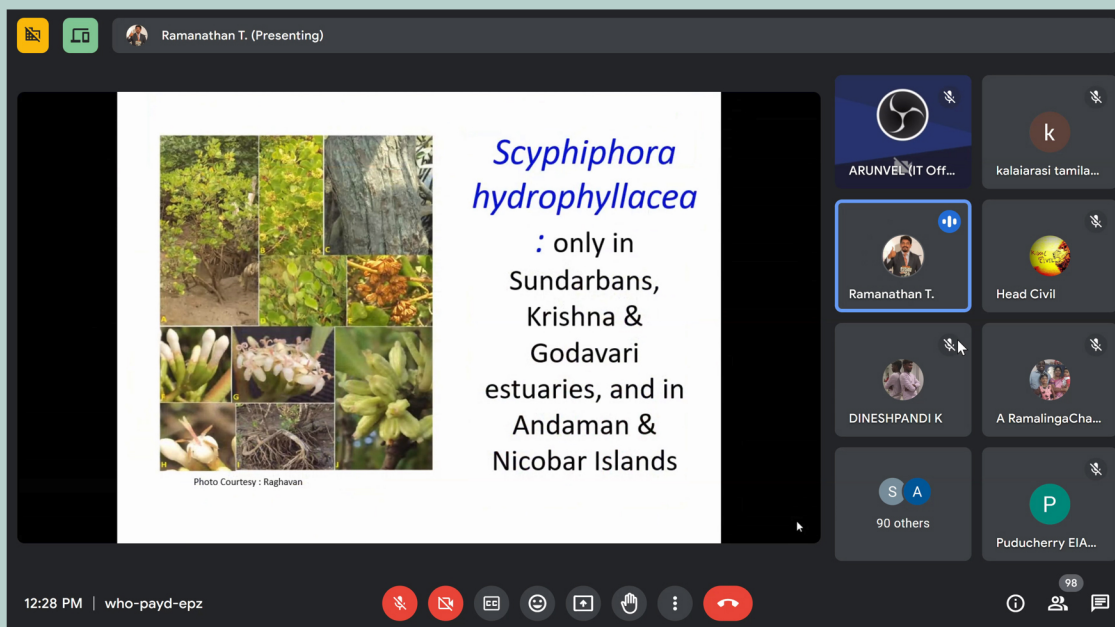
## Village Sensitization Programmes at Uruvaiyar Eri, Villianur

Department of Science, Technology & Environment, Govt. of Puducherry & Puducherry EIACP PC Hub jointly with District Rural Development Agency, Puducherry conducted Village Sensitization Programmes under Mission LiFE at Uruvaiyar Eri, Villianur on 25.07.2023. A total of 370 rural people were participated in the said sensitization programme. The participants were sensitized on the Mission LiFE Theme i.e. Save Water, Say No to single use plastic & Waste reduced. Experts from Er. S. Sudalai, Assistant Professor, Pondicherry University has briefed the Mission LiFE themes and also explained the effective measures to reduce waste. Adoption of One Day One Habit for better Lifestyle under Mission Life Theme were highlighted during the programme. The cleanliness drive was also carried out near the Lake side of the said location. All the participants took LiFE Pledge to adopt environment friendly habits.



## Webinar on the occasion of International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem

Puducherry EIACP Hub & TCE jointly with EIACP PC-RP Hub conducted a webinar on the title "Nurturing Mangroves for Future" on 26.07.2023. The talk was given by Dr. T. Ramanathan, Assoc. Professor, CAS in Marine Biology, Annamalai University. Nearly 150 participants were participate through digitally and physically.



## Mission LiFE Programme

Puducherry EIACP Hub conducted mass awareness campaign on Mission LiFE at different schools & Community Service Scheme (CSS) Programme Officers in Puducherry. The details are as follows:

Sl. No.	Date	Name of the School	No. of Participants
1.	04.08.2023	Pensionnat de Jeunes Fills Government Girls French High School, Puducherry	87
2.	11.08.2023	Government Middle School, Nallavadu - Puducherry	275
3.	22.08.2023	Makkal Thalaivar V Subbiah Government High School	82
4.	29.08.2023	V. Venkatasubra Reddiar Govt. technical Hr. Sec. School, Lawspet, Puducherry	141
5.	29.08.2023	Dr. Ambedkar Govt. Hr. Sec. School, Kirumampakkam	484
6.	31.08.2023	Shree Vani Vidyalaya school, Puducherry	67



## Mission LiFE Programme

Puducherry EIACP Hub conducted mass awareness campaign on Mission LiFE at Industries & Schools in Puducherry. The details are as follows:

Sl. No.	Date	Name of the School	No. of Participants
1.	01.09.2023	M/s. Sundaram Fasteners Limited, Korkadu Revenue Village, Nettapakkam.	55
2.	01.09.2023	Sankara Vidyalaya Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Puducherry	214
3.	08.09.2023	M/s. Indian Nippon Electricals Ltd, Nettapakkam.	70
4.	12.09.2023	Bharathi Government Higher Secondary School, Bahour, Puducherry	226
5.	21.09.2023	Pandit Duraisamy Government High School, Pethuchettypet, Lawspet	88
6.	22.09.2023	M/s. Lucas TVS, Eripakkam Revenue Village, Nettapakkam	81
7.	26.09.2023	Kannagi Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Villianur	55



## Ideation Hackathon



Puducherry EIACP PC Hub conducted evaluation meeting on Ideation Hackathon on the Themes 'Single Use Plastic Reduced And E-Waste Reduced' Under Mission LiFE held on 11.09.2023. 8 teams from E-Waste reduced and 6 teams from Single Use plastic reduced were given their technical presentations with start-up models. 3 Ideas in E-Waste Reduced and 2 ideas in Single Use Plastic Reduced were selected.



## International Coastal Cleanup Day Celebration

Puducherry EIACP Hub in Coordination with Puducherry Pollution Control Committee organized Coastal Cleanup Drive on the eve of International Coastal Clean-up Day Celebration - 2023 At Chinnaveerampattinam Beach on 16.09.2023. 105 participants were participated in the clean-up campaign.



## International Day For The Preservation Of The Ozone Layer

Puducherry EIACP of Puducherry Pollution Control Committee conducted Workshop on the theme : Montreal Protocol: Fixing the Ozone Layer and Reducing Climate Change, Drawing and Quiz Competition on the Occasion Of International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer on 16.09.2023. 403 participants were participated.







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