

TREE PLANTING NEWSLETTER



2020 UPDATE

2019 brought a good monsoon and as a result, facilitated better promotion of SOTE's tree planting programme in our project areas. Our partner NGOs, CRUSADE and MASARD, have been the driving force behind the **planting of over 8,000 trees this year**. Planting trees in the villages of Tamil Nadu relies on your generous donations, as well as our NGOs integral local knowledge, hard work and commitment to fighting climate change.

During the planting season of Oct 2019 – Jan 2020, CRUSADE distributed **2200 tree saplings** to Women's Self Help Groups and schools within the rural villages they support. Fruit trees distributed included: Mango, Lemon, Gooseberry, Coconut, Guava, Pomegranate and Chiku. Shade and Timber trees included Neem, Teak, Gull mohar, Red timber and Vengai. The saplings were divided between 240 women and 7 schools, after participants were trained on the methods required to maximise a tree's chances of survival. *(cont. page 2)*

Photo: Coconut, teak and other seedlings being distributed to SHG members.

Dear Supporter,

It is a pleasure to update you on our tree planting scheme.

The saplings planted throughout 2019 are standing strong and are being well looked after. Vegetables are being cultivated in gardens and fruits are beginning to show on trees that were planted over the last few years.

One of the highlights of my trip to India this year was sitting in the shade of a lemon tree, with a family who had been cultivating trees and vegetables in their garden. You are providing for these families in more ways than I could ever have imagined. They thanked us for helping them feed their children.

Lena Calland
Development Officer

Meanwhile, MASARD launched a campaign in August 2019 to plant 10,000 trees over the next two years. Since then, **5,000 trees** have been planted alongside highways and rural village roads. In 6 months, the saplings have doubled in size, with some standing at over 10 feet tall. In three years, these trees will provide a variety of fruits and medicines, as well as creating shade and lower temperatures in the local villages.

A row of trees planted in August 2019, photographed in Jan 2020 with handmade guards to shield them from animals



KITCHEN GARDENS

As well as trees, your donations are funding vegetable cultivation in the gardens of Tamil Nadu villages. CRUSADE and MASARD have been encouraging the growing of kitchen gardens this year.

During the pre-monsoon season of 2019, CRUSADE distributed **4650 packets of vegetable seeds** to WSHG members for organic cultivation. The packets each held 5-10 seeds and contained a combination of: Aubergine, Tomato, Lady fingers, Chillies, Beans, Radish and Pumpkin seeds. These seeds grow at an impressive rate with a participant stating that she: **“had a harvest of ten pumpkins”** and was **“able to share them with everyone in the village”**.

On visit to Tamil Nadu in early 2020, Murray and Janet visited several kitchen gardens and were very impressed with the quality of the gardens that they saw. They stated:

“These are by far the best kitchen gardens we have seen in our 30 years visiting India. The commitment to these plots and the capability of the participants and the yield is outstanding”.

In August 2019, MASARD WSHG members were inspired by awareness programmes led by the horticulture department of Hosur university and have gone on to grow crops in plots outside their homes. The gardens are a delight



Vegetables growing in rows at an organic kitchen garden

to see in action, with equally spaced growing rows and sturdy mesh fences. What makes these gardens even more inviting, is the sight of local children running around with faces full of fruit juice. We are impressed with MASARD's commitment to launching new plots in the past two years and congratulate them on excelling in this new challenge.



Janet and Murray being presented with foods whilst visiting a MASARD kitchen garden in Jan 2020

CRUSADE GROW SAPLINGS AT COMPUND

CRUSADE grow a variety of herbal plants, trees and vegetables in their green compound on the outskirts of Pudupakkam village. The centre is being used to grow saplings in organic compost using natural pesticides, which are then sold at a small cost to kitchen garden participants.

The minimal fee of the saplings funds the wages of the staff growing vegetables on site. The fee acts as an incentive for the buyer, as they have invested their own money into the seeds. SOTE believe that an incentive to cultivate vegetables is key to long term success and **sustainability**.

Photo A: Aloe Vera and tree saplings growing at CRUSADE organic compound.

Photo B: Pilot project 'Organic Grow Bags' containing essential soils and nutrients to be grown on WSHG members rooftops



A



B

HERBAL GARDENS IN HOMES

Following the **health training of 153 women** in 2019, there has been demand for herbal and medicine gardens. One module of the course teaches how to process plants as home remedies for the treatment of minor ailments and injuries.

As women have requested, CRUSADE have provided participants with a multitude of herbal seeds to plant in their gardens. Plants included Aloe vera, Karpoora valli (Indian borage), Aavarampoo (tanners cassia), Vallarai (Indian penny worth), Insulin Perandai (veldtgrapl), Marul, Chittarathai, Lemon Grass and Ranakalli. The plants are funded by SOTE's tree planting scheme in line with our Health programme.

TREE PLANTING IMPACT IN 2019

2019 has demonstrated great progression for our tree planting scheme in rural Tamil Nadu. Our team thoroughly enjoyed meeting participants of the scheme on their visit in January. The people we met were kind, positive and full of smiles. They thanked us for providing them with food to feed their families and shade to shelter them from the heat.

The trees planted last year are standing strong and our NGOs sign-up sheet for vegetable cultivation is full of willing volunteers. It is apparent that as people have watched their neighbours benefit from kitchen gardens, they themselves are willing to make the scheme beneficial for their own families. Planting trees in Tamil Nadu is of vital importance within our attempt to help mitigate the effects of climate change on the area.

Plans for 2020:

Assuming the monsoon rainfall will arrive in 2020, CRUSADE have set a target to distribute 4000 fruit / timber tree seedlings to WSHG members, schools and marginal farmers. In addition, CRUSADE plan to distribute 5000 vegetable seed packets and 2000 grow bags, as well as 2000 herbal plants. MASARD are on track to honour their pledge and plant a further 5,000 trees in 2020 and plan to help set up more kitchen gardens.

The SOTE team and our NGOs thank you for your continued kindness in supporting our scheme and are excited to keep you updated on what 2020 brings.



WSHG member growing teak trees



Pachaiyamma, a WSHG member, proudly showing off with tomato plants

CASE STUDY: 'A GREEN REVOLUTION'

In the small village of Sengazhuneer Medu, 35-year old Amudha has turned her small piece of land into a beautiful garden. Seeing the yield of her crops provide food for her family as well as a source of income, she labels her efforts as a 'Green Revolution'.

"My neighbours like to buy from my garden because I do not use any chemicals like fertilizer. I use cow-dung and compost from our backyard which is free. So, the vegetables from my garden are fresh and are free of disease-causing chemicals".



To promote growing vegetables without pesticides, CRUSADE offers vegetable seeds and tree saplings at a nominal price to members of Self-Help Groups. Amudha's garden exhibits ladies fingers, different types of greens, and long beans. There are also 20 teak trees, gooseberry trees, drumstick trees and herbal plants.

CASE STUDY: 'TEAK TREASURE'



Photo A: Amudha collecting crops in her impressive kitchen garden

Photo B: Bagyalakshmi smiling in her garden. Janet and Murray visited both gardens in Jan 2020 and congratulated Amudha and Bagyalakshmi on their efforts and commitment.

The 29 teak plants are a sign of fortune for Bagyalakshmi(55) Living in a small village called Devadanam in Minjur Block. She never realised the value of teak plants when she joined the scheme. Now, after seeing the crops provide an income for her family, she keeps a protective eye on her yield.

Bagyalakshmi recently invested around rs.10,000 to fence the treasure. CRUSADE estimate that her crop of teak trees will be worth rs.300,00 after 15 years.

Along with teak plants, Bagyalakshmi has papaya, guava, drumstick and gooseberry fruit trees. "Some of it we use for our own use and some we distribute among our relatives," she says.

"Both my husband and I work together in the garden and are thinking many ways to improve it further," she says enthusiastically. Silpa, her 25 year daughter is a science graduate working an assistant to an auditor.