

TREE PLANTING NEWSLETTER

2021 UPDATE

The cost to plant a tree

The average cost of planting a tree has been steadily rising since we last reviewed it four years ago. Inflation runs at over 10% in India and on top of that we are now having to provide tree guards for the growing number of trees that are being planted on common land.

Without protection, the saplings would have little chance of survival from hungry goats and other animals. All this means that the average cost of planting a tree has now risen to £2.



Trees planted at Patakotte High School - 2 years later

Dear tree sponsors,

As you can no doubt imagine, 2020 was a challenging year for the tree planting programme. However, despite the pandemic restrictions, our Indian partners were able to plant over 11,000 trees. We think this is a remarkable achievement in the circumstances.

Our partners have demonstrated great desire and resolve to do something local and practical to reduce the effects of climate change in the communities they support.

As part of the tree planting programme, we are promoting kitchen gardens. Many trees have been planted in back gardens to provide both fruits and valuable shade.

The change in conditions provides an opportunity for residents to grow vegetables and medicinal herbs, as well as fruit trees. This not only produces a supply of fresh organic vegetables for families at no cost, but it also reduces their food carbon footprint. We are therefore including news of progress in this area in this edition.



Trees planted on national highway - 2 years later



The saplings that Murray, Janet and Lena planted in January 2020 - 1 year later

MASARD

Despite immense challenges, MASARD have worked incredibly hard to keep up their tree planting pledge. Their staff, village animators, volunteers, gardeners, schools and participants have all shown great enthusiasm and passion for the environment and successfully planted 10,000 trees in 2020.

Murray, Janet, Lena and SOTE visitors had the honour of planting the first trees of 2020 on their visit in January. Since then, more than 1000 trees were planted on public roads and 500 trees were planted in the grounds of Pathakotte High School. Village animators were allocated 200 trees each to plant in their respective villages. At Ashagram Orphanage, 1000 fruit trees were planted, and in TMG KOTE village every family has been allocated moringa and curry leaves saplings.

Cutting costs, getting creative

Tree guards are required to protect the bases of trees that are vulnerable to animal interference. 'Professional' tree guards can cost anything from Rs. 2500 - 5000 (£25-£50)

per tree. With the need for tree guards increasing, MASARD have created a cost-effective solution to ensure that the trees we plant have the best possible chance of survival.

Local farmers dispose of wooden poles after cultivating their crops. MASARD purchase these poles at a minimal cost and use a local welder to create rings with steel rods. The team then use the same green mesh that is used in kitchen garden fencing to wrap around the poles and rings. The vulnerable saplings are protected at a fraction of the cost, totalling around Rs. 250/- (£2.50) per tree guard.



Trees planted on rural road with MASARD tree guards

Kitchen gardens: What started as a means for families to grow their own vegetables and utilise waste water, has quickly become a means of survival. At the beginning of the Tamil Nadu lockdown in February 2020 all local shops and transport links were closed.

Rural villagers were unable to attend work or obtain food and many were left feeling anxious for survival. Kitchen gardens provided a lifeline to participants and local neighbours at a time when obtaining necessities was almost impossible.



Coconut trees at Ashagram - 3 years later

CASE STUDY



Kala with radish from her kitchen garden

Kala - Kamandoddi village 'The blessing of a garden'

When the first phase of lockdown was imposed, Kala had no savings or household supplies. Kala, along with her husband and son, work as daily wage agricultural workers and were left without an income. She explained to MASARD staff that she was frightened but knew that she had 'a blessing in her garden'.

During this first phase, Kala and her family relied heavily on their kitchen garden. They were unable to buy rice, but survived on their crops of radish, brinjals, cabbages and plantains. As the lockdown restrictions eased, Kala continued to use the crops in her garden and was able to avoid local markets and feed her family with organic, nutritious food.

A message from MASARD CEO, John. L. Fernandes

"Our hopes for the future are that we can build our own water tank to save us money on dry days. We would love to develop a small nursery and grow our own saplings and are planning ways to become more sustainable.

We are incredibly happy and thankful to SOTE for the opportunity to contribute to our Mother Planet by planting so many trees in 2020. The local villagers and children have shown great passion"



John with Patakotte primary children at tree planting event in January 2020



Saplings being dropped off at village for planting

CRUSADE

This year, CRUSADE distributed 1,700 trees between 436 women and disability group members. Participating families were taught how to plant and water trees, and the saplings were presented on the doorsteps of homes in order to follow social distancing guidelines. Distribution was planned so that the saplings could be planted on the eve of the monsoon, or during the monsoon season for maximising survival chances.

To protect the most vulnerable trees 155 tree guards and 18 fencing rolls (measuring 10 meters each) were provided at a subsidised cost by CRUSADE.

Vegetable seed distribution

Field staff and health workers have worked incredibly hard to match the success of last years vegetable seed distribution. In total, 15kg of vegetable seeds were organised into 5-10g bags and distributed to Self Help Group members before the onset of the monsoon. The seeds included beans, eggplant, pumpkin, okra, bitter melon and calabash melon.

The animators organising the seed packets have enthusiastically participated in this year's distribution work and have enjoyed having a sense of purpose throughout unsettling times.

Organic grow bags

CRUSADE have continued to cultivate organic grow bags at their compound. In 2020, 140 grow bags were distributed and are now growing on flat roofs, terraces, and patios.



Animators organising vegetable seeds

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Medicinal plants

Natural remedies are widely accepted across Tamil Nadu and can be used to care for minor ailments such as coughs, fevers, skin rashes, stomach issues, burns and allergies.

In 2020, CRUSADE trained 586 local Self Help Group members in the cultivation of herbal plants and distributed 1606 herbal saplings between participants. The saplings were also grown at CRUSADEs organic compound and are continuing to grow on patios and in village gardens.



Herbal plants distribution

CASE STUDY

Anjali Jothi - New Erumaivetti Palayam 'Papaya pride'

Anjali Jothi has been a member of the Magudam (Crown) Women's Self Help Group for a number of years. She is enthusiastic about growing trees in her garden and also grows a variety of vegetables including greens and beans, and herbal plants including aloe vera, basil, galangal, pirandai and alari.

In 2020, Anjali had a yield of 35 delicious Papaya fruits. After home consumption, Anjali earned Rs. 750/- (£7.50) by selling the surplus fruits to neighbours. She tells CRUSADE that her friends enjoy buying her crops, as they know that they are grown organically and are free from pesticides and chemicals.

Anjali quotes: 'My trees are my pride. I use my herbal plants to help improve my children's memory power and care for their colds and bones and my home-grown fruits and vegetables were most helpful during lockdown. Thank you SOTE.'



Anjali picking a papaya fruit

A message from CRUSADE CEO, Jothi Ramalingham

"The year 2020 has been unique in terms of adversity and challenges. The novel COVID-19 dealt a severe blow on normal project activities of CRUSADE. Although we could not visit all the plots, tree planting participants' feedback has been uniformly positive. The benefits of growing vegetables and fruits in gardens was widely recognised during the months of lockdown."