

TREE PLANTING NEWSLETTER

2021-2022

Dear Tree Planting Sponsors,

After the tribulations of 2020, we had hoped that India could look forward to a smoother ride throughout 2021. Unfortunately, this was not the case. India's second wave spread wider than its predecessor and inflicted greater suffering on rural villages.

Our projects were temporarily halted, but our partners continued to support vulnerable communities through a web of trained village workers. Tree planting plans persevered, as did alternative health care and education programmes. Such programmes could not have taken place without the passion and commitment of our partners. Despite diversities, their pledge to the planet and its people has been inspiring.

Thank you for funding our environmental work despite your own challenges. The SOTE team and our partners, MASARD and CARE, send sincere gratitude.

Development Officer, Lena Calland

PLANTING TREES - CRUSADE

During the 2021 monsoon, Tamil Nadu received rainfall of around 40% above average. In Tiruvallur, Chennai, CRUSADE stagnant surface water and covid restrictions meant that the team were unable to meet their expected tree planting plans. However, with great effort, CRUSADE's field staff and volunteers distributed **1282 trees** to Women's Self Help Group (WSHG) members and People with Disabilities (PwD) group members. The fruit and timber trees were successfully planted outside homes and on communal village land.



Progress of Tree planted on highway in 2020



Local women planting tree at awareness campaign



Kamandoddi High School Students and Teacher planting a tree

DISTRIBUTING VEGETABLE SEEDS

CRUASDE procured 34kgs of quality vegetable seeds including greens, beans, bitter gourd, snake gourd, tomato, and radish. Field staff and village animators organised the seeds into 5-10g bags and **distributed 5200 packets of seeds** to WSHG and PWD group members ahead of the monsoon. Seeds were also planted at Pudupakkam and Thinaipakkam CRUSADE centres to be used for staff training. The surplus of these vegetables was sold to local people to generate income for CRUSADE.

These fruits and vegetables are being grown without the use of chemical fertilizer or pesticides and are helping to improve nutrition in families. CRUSADE report that distributing seeds has created a sense of ownership and pride among communities and encouraged family members of all ages to get involved with harvesting throughout 2021.

MASARD

In Northwest Tamil Nadu, MASARD experienced similar challenges. Over 1000 trees specially selected for shade were planted on public roads outside Addakurukki, Kukulpalli, Pathakotte, Annanagra, and Kannalati. Saplings were also planted on the National Highway (Bangalore – Chennai) by field staff, government officials, and local volunteers. Around 1500 trees were planted between Pathakotte High School, Kamandodii High School, Addakurukki High School and by students and teachers.

Around 1000 fruit tree saplings were planted at Ashagram Orphanage by children from the orphanage and field staff. Saplings were also donated to local temples.

In addition, 1500 saplings were planted by families across the 12 villages MASARD supports. The most popular request among families was for Moringa and curry leaf trees, both of which were distributed by MASARD's dedicated team. The total amount of **trees planted by MASARD in 2021 exceeds 5000**, a huge success for their team.



MASARD Field workers, Elizabeth and Nandhini, with two-year-old fruit trees at Ashagram.



CRUSADE Staff & Volunteers packing seeds



CRUSADE procuring saplings from nursery

TREE CARETAKERS

To reach heights of a few meters in the first two years, saplings require persistent care and watering. We are pleased to highlight key tree caretakers and their importance within our environmental work.

CRUSADE: Field Staff, Ammu



Ammu with trees she helped to grow



Ammu is a health worker, village coordinator, and environmental enthusiast. She is well respected by her community and is the Panchayat level federation Secretary, and the Business Correspondent of Canara Bank. She has been instrumental in creating two WSHGs in her community and oversees tailoring, health awareness, life skills and environmental incentives within the groups.

Ammu has passionately taught many families how to properly plant, fence and utilize organic manure and wastewater. Her passions have inspired many families to plant trees and start up kitchen gardens. Anjali, a WSHG member supported by Ammu states: "My trees are my pride. I use the herbal plants to improve my children's memory power and heal their cold and common illnesses. Thank you Ammu for preparing us and inspiring us."

MASARD

Ashagram gardener, Vadivel

Vadivel is a permanent employee at MASARD's orphanage campus. Although SOTE does not fund the Orphanage programme, we have donated over 2000 trees to the campus over the past 3 years.

Each morning, Vadivel waters the trees with a hosepipe connected to a water tank. In the evenings, he removes any weeds that are growing around the saplings. He is a well-loved member of staff and feels a sense of pride for his contribution to the orphanage and the environment.



Vadivel tending to Ashagram trees

Addakurukki waterers, Parmeshwari and Jyothamma

On alternative days, Parmeshwari and Jyothamma water the saplings planted on public roads in Addakurukki village. Both women attend daily coolie agricultural work in the fields. MASARD pay the women a 250rs per day to attend to SOTE saplings.

Before 9am and after 5pm, they collect water from the nearest government taps using plastic pots and water the saplings. Due to their care, the trees are growing well. Every sapling they care for has survived its first few months of growth.



Jyothamma watering a sapling

KITCHEN GARDENS

During both waves of coronavirus, Kitchen Gardens provided nutritious food to families and their neighbours. The ability to grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs, alleviated the worry of starvation. As communities witnessed the important role that kitchen gardens played throughout the pandemic, interest rose among the rural poor.

CRUSADE has helped to set up and currently oversee 70 kitchen gardens, and MASARD oversees 12. MASARD now have a waiting list of 75 families, and plan to set up 30 kitchen gardens in 2022.



MASARD participant, Kavitha, in her kitchen garden with vegetables and trees

TREE GROWTH PROGRESS

With the support of CRUSADE, Pachaiyamma, aged 55, has had great success with the growth of her trees over the past few years.

She is a member of Krishnabahavan WSHG in Salipettai Village (Minjur) and lives with her brother, aged 48, who has learning difficulties. The trees and vegetables in her garden provide Pachaiyamma with a source of relief and a small income.

During 2020/21, she planted a mango, guava, pomegranate, papaya, and chikku tree. Photo 1 shows the growth of the mango sapling after 1 ½ year.

In 2019/20, she planted one coconut, one guava and two papaya saplings. The trees are now 2 1/2 years old. Photos 2 show the growth of the coconut tree.

Pachaiyamma planted four drumstick trees 3 years ago. Photo 3 shows the trees in 2021.



A summarising message from MASARD CEO, Dr. John L Fernandes

“The trees we have planted in the previous years under SOTE programmes are now growing very well. Many of them are already giving beautiful flowers and shade to street walkers.

It is a great pleasant sight to see so many big green trees on the main roads of our villages and national highways, and know that this is thanks to the support of Salt of the Earth.”

