

## Nizhal Annual Report 2016-17



### NIZHAL

#### ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

Nizhal celebrates 12 wonderful years with heartfelt thanks to all who have been with us in this journey, our dedicated team of volunteers and the warm hearted support of our well wishers!

We wish to remember with fondness and gratitude, the guiding spirit of our Chief Advisor, the Late Mr. G Dattatri, and our Advisor Dr. Sekar Raghavan, who set us on this journey.

Many landmark initiatives have been initiated last year and many exciting projects continue to inspire more communities. Our diverse team of volunteers, YuVa (youth) member team and Junior YuVa (children's) team continue to inspire us on our journey!

#### **ROADSIDE GREENING OF WARD 176**

In 2013, Nizhal came up with the plan to map the trees in Ward 176, Zone 13, of the Greater Chennai Corporation. This exercise was carried out by Nizhal volunteers, and the results were consolidated and substantiated by GIS specialist TEEMS India. For the first time, a detailed tree census had been carried out in any public area in the city!

Post Vardah, this data proved to be a valuable base reference. TEEMS India, did a survey after the rains to determine the actual loss of tree cover.

Equipped with this data, Nizhal formulated a plan to restore the green cover in this ward, in some areas. A MoU has been signed with Vijaya Bank, to sponsor saplings and tree guards. Planting and critical post planting care will be monitored by the community.



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### GREENING PROJECTS

- Greening of the Tambaram Sanatorium campus:  
A hundred saplings, sponsored by the KLA Tencor team, were planted, including indigenous species like Magizham, Kadamba, Ezhilappalai, Mandarai, Sarakonrai, Poomarudhu and Neer Marudhu. Saplings add to biodiversity, provide therapeutic environment, colour and beauty to the campus!  
The future of these saplings is being closely monitored by Nizhal volunteers in the Tambaram/ Chitlapakkam area.
- Fruit bearing and flowering trees like Sapota, Pala, Ma, PooMaruthu, Naaval were planted by the KLA Tencor team under guidance of Nizhal expert team, at Institute of Mental Health, Kilpauk.  
Gardening is part of the therapy at IMH and Nizhal has already completed one successful phase of greening at the IMH. Truly greening of lands and minds too!
- On Friday, March 3rd, 2017, members of the local community, joined hands with employees from PayPal, to green a roadside in Velachery, near the MRTS station. Facilitated by Nizhal, 40 saplings of Magizham and Kadamba were planted. Informative name boards on the tree species are to be put up to educate and enthuse the community to join hands to care for the saplings.
- Greening of the campus at R K Nagar Arts and Science College in Tondiarpet- Nizhal facilitated planting of 100 tree saplings in partnership with the Forest Department, Tamil Nadu.
- Nizhal guided NABAAT( Nature's Aid By Adopting a Tree)- a group in Royapuram and North Chennai dedicated to planting and adopting trees. In February alone, around 94 trees were planted. A dedicated sub group takes care of the trees, does house to house surveys in the neighbourhood, to reach tree sponsors and adopters!
- Post Vardah was a really busy time for our Team, engaging in restoring and caring for bruised and devastated trees on roadsides and parks!
- We reached out to local communities and also connected with the Hindu Friends of Chennai Campaign, bringing in more volunteers from across the city! Conservation and restoration campaigns were conducted at Kottur MRTS station, KTP, Nageswara Park in Mylapore and Panagal Park in T Nagar.

### TRAINING THE TRAINER - WORKSHOP FOR TEACHERS



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Team Nizhal conducted an interactive workshop for teachers on July 22nd, to share ideas and activities that will help inculcate in children, an interest towards trees and the biodiversity in their own neighbourhoods. The program included looking at special aspects of the tree and focused on the tree as a habitat, the interdependence of life and role of a tree in nature among others. Trees were seen through stories, mythology, culture, science and maths, through a tree walk and teachers provided with handouts. The workshop was well attended by 35 teachers from across Chennai. Zero waste and eco friendly objectives were followed in the true spirit!

### CHITLAPAKKAM NEER VANAM (CNV)

#### Greening and Eco restoration of Lakes, Rivers and Water Bodies

Nizhal has pioneered a community driven program of eco restoration of waterbodies across Chennai with its flagship project at the **Chitlapakkam Lake on 3<sup>rd</sup> Main Road, Chitlapakkam**. The creation of the **Neer Vanam** on the banks of this lake with local community involvement could be the best possible answer to the perennial problem of cleanup, restoration of water bodies.

The initiative is close to celebrating two glorious years. The involvement of the local community in caring for their own neighbourhood water bodies is the biggest success of this project.



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### **KOTTURPURAM TREE PARK (KTP)**

Initiated in 2008 as a joint project of PWD, Nizhal, and Citizens Committee, to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> year of the PWD, this 5-acre rubbish dump has been converted into a biodiversity hotspot of indigenous flora and fauna! Home to not only more than 150 species of indigenous trees, it is also a home to diverse species of insects, birds, mammals and even deer! Nizhal has put up informative pictorial boards on insects and birds.

Weekend Pasumai Pani/ Shramdaans (volunteering activity) get tremendous response from the general public, corporate volunteers and student communities.

KTP is a living laboratory. Botany students from SIET College, and Horticulture students from the Horticulture Training College have gained valuable hands on knowledge here.

The Madhavaram Tree Park (MTP) is being cared for by Nizhal volunteers and TANUVAS, as a model of synergic partnership.

Our Community Parks across the city inspire visitors to start similar green hubs in their neighbourhoods!

### **GREEN PRISONS PROGRAM**

Initiated in November 2009 in Puzhal Central Prison, Chennai, the Nizhal- Green Prisons program is active across Tamil Nadu - Cuddalore, Trichy, Pudukottai, Vellore, Salem, Madurai, Coimbatore and Palayamkottai Central Prisons.

Recently Nizhal Founder Trustee Shobha Menon was nominated by current ADGP Prisons, Mr.Vijay Kumar, for Nizhal's contribution through the Green Prisons Program and conferred the Woman Achiever Award in the field of Environment by AKP News Media in New Delhi.

Team Nizhal wishes to thank former ADGPs Mr.R. Nataraj, Mr.J. K. Tripathi and officials of the Prison Department for their unstinted support in this greening of minds and lands across the prisons in Tamil Nadu!

Technical inputs related to green prisons of all the central prisons were provided in the Review meeting of the central prisons held at the Prison Head Quarters, in Egmore, Chennai.



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The Nizhal team continues to interact with the ADGP in office, for fresh strategies to rejuvenate the green project.

### **YUVA AND JUNIOR YUVA PROGRAMS**

YuVa, Youth Leadership program grooms young leaders to work for the environment and fosters communication skills in the youth through action/ awareness programs. The youth brigade conducts FTCs (Free the Tree Campaigns) and Shramdaans.

Junior YuVa for children is inspiring young minds to think green. Hands on sessions help them to understand and celebrate trees and nature. This program is in its second year. The participants observe and record seasonal changes in trees, learn about various aspects of trees through games and artwork.

### **TREE WALKS**

The focus was on the impact of Vardah and the importance of the right choice of species for greening our common spaces during our hugely popular Madras Day tree walks.

Many schools, colleges and other groups also visit KTP for tree walks. KTP is a living laboratory and everybody who comes here is inspired to continue the work in their neighbourhoods.



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Some walks held the past year include:

- Gandhinagar residents in a Green Walkathon!
- TAGTI Trust
- Kalpavriksh Montessori
- Sprouts Montessori
- Al Qamar Academy
- Mahindra Pride Schools
- Tree walks for differently abled students of the Gandhinagar school
- Tree walk at Chennai Water Forum, presenting Neervanam concept as a tool for waterbodies conservation with special reference to CNV.
- Indian Montessori Training Courses - Chennai
- Chennai Mathematical Institute
- St.Louis Institute
- Chennai Trekking Club
- Duchess Club
- Chennai Architecture Foundation
- Dr.MGR Janaki College of Arts and Science

### **CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING AND COMMITMENT**

Partnering with Corporate bodies in our projects has now become a regular feature of our greening efforts. Some of them sponsor the saplings, tree guards, fencing or tools, under their CSR programs. We also have employees volunteering in our Pasumai Pani / Shramdaan sessions, or attending our awareness programs.

Some of the groups that have volunteered this year are:

- Sytel Technologies
- TCS employees, Chennai One, Perungudi
- Mahindra Pride students
- RBI Staff College, Teynampet
  
- McKinsey & Co
- American Consulate
- Chennai Runners, Chromepet
- Jnanaadri Technovations



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### PALLIYIL NIZHAL

Nizhal works with sponsors to provide green cover and herb gardens in Chennai Corporation schools. After the Damodarapuram and Perungudi schools, it is the turn of the Thoraipakkam School.

Enjoyable and informative games are conducted by our team to illustrate tree care concepts!

### CELEBRATING ENVIRONMENT DAY- THE NIZHAL WAY

Team Nizhal celebrated World environment day with a difference. 5 tree veterans across the Kotturpuram neighbourhood - *Vengai, Kalyanamurungai, Vadhanarayanan, Puliyamaram* and *Nagalingam* were given granite name boards. DCP (South) Mr. Balakrishnan did the honours!

A big step forward in the protection of landmark trees and our green heritage.

### OUTREACH

Nizhal has been invited by various Government Departments, Corporates, Educational institutions, Residents' Associations to spread message of sensitive and sustained greening. Such sessions have led to their involvement in greening projects.

- **Madras Medical College Eco Club** initiated greening of their campus by planting and undertaking to nurture trees.
- Involving local school students, **Bala Vida Mandir**, Gandhinagar to install tree name boards along with one liners for the trees in 4<sup>th</sup> Main Road, Gandhi Nagar.

**Presentations** creating awareness and initiating action have been made in different forums, including:

- Ashok Nagar residents
- YMCA
- Rotary Club of Madras South
- RBI Staff College, Teynampet
- SQS India Pvt. Ltd
- Cancer Victors Meet
- Kurukshetra, CEG, Anna University



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- Children's Club of Mylapore
- Shakambari Women's Club
- Dr.Dharmambal Govt Polytechnic College for Women
- Rajiv Gandhi Engineering College students
- HVF Women's Day Celebrations
- Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University
- Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University, Vandalur
- Lamakaan - Hyderabad
- Town Hall - Reciprocity Fest at Kalakshetra
- Outreach - RadioOne FM
- Outreach - Doordarshan
- DHFL
- Nokia Factory
- Anna University
- Guru Shree Shanthivijai Jain Vidyalaya
- Innoppl Technologies
- Chennai Architecture Foundation
- Outreach - Association of Geography Teachers
- Bala Vidya Mandir
- Jnanaadri Technovations
- Barclay's Bank
- TCS Siruseri
- Stella Matutina College of Education
- IVY Plus-LSE Mixer
- Duchess Club
- College of Engg. Guindy TRIKONA
- Childrens's Workshop in Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, Perambur, Chennai
- Chennai High School, Puliur, Kodambakkam

### WORKING IN TANDEM WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

- **Nizhal is on the Committee constituted by the High Court of Madras** to find a solution to the issue of buildings potentially being damaged by trees, in their campus.
- **Nizhal has conducted a series of workshops for the Corporation of Chennai (CoC) officials and staff** (AEs, Park Overseers, staff working in





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parks) on tree care, tree health management, scientific pruning of trees in the city.

The workshop idea has been initiated and executed by the Nizhal team, as a part of Action plan post cyclone Vardah. Nizhal experts conducted 8 sessions over a period of 2 months, at the Adyar Poonga. The interactive presentations were followed by hands on demonstrations and tree talks at the Poonga premises.

Truly a milestone in Nizhal's journey!

- TN Assn. of Senior Professionals of Environment and Forests - Brainstorming session on Cyclone Vardah- Biodiversity Loss and Revival
- Meeting with Railway officials at ICF, Perambur
- Interview for Resilient Cities for Rockefeller Foundation
- Providing potential planting locations to forest department for post Vardah greening.
- Initiation of community involvement along with the Government agency in Kalkuttai pond conservation and Neervanam
- Facilitating survey and greening plan of the new extended campus of OTA, Guindy and Co-optex, Thilalaadivalliamai, Egmore for sensitive greening.

The Nizhal Team is happy to note concerted efforts are on to move towards a Comprehensive Greening Plan for Chennai as a Smart City!

## RECOGNISING EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERS

### T.Krishnarajan Memorial Award

This year it's being given to Exceptional Youth Volunteer, Hemanth. He is a committed volunteer at Chitlapaakkam Neer Vanam Shramdaans every single weekend, and continues to inspire and make a difference in his very special way!