



ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010

It has been another wonderful year for Nizhal filled with people, plants, and experiential learning. In the last 365 days, our organization has reached out to many communities, extending the joy and love for trees and nature. Nizhal organization has reached where it has today with the unfailing support of many volunteers across the city - students, schools, institutions, companies, professionals in various fields, media and the government. Here is a brief summary of our activities....

Greening the MRTS stations

First begun at the Kasturba Station, it was followed by the Kotturpuram station. The project is being done with active participation by the local community led by Murugan and Parimala, Nizhal members (Tejas, Mohan Ram, Sai Dhamodaran, Madhuri and team, and Subhashini) and students from KRMM school. .Native saplings are being planted, watered and looked after by the volunteers, along with cleanliness campaigns and garbage clearing around the stations.

PWD Corporation Tree Park

Every Sunday at 4 p.m, children and adults mill around the Park along the Adyar river doing various activities like pitting, planting, watering, weeding, manuring. More than 240 saplings have been planted and they are being taken care of by many volunteers. Nizhal members along with regular participation from Youth Red Cross at Anna University, members of Bhumi, and students from various districts in Tamil Nadu volunteer at the Park.

A plan for the layout of the park has been done and photo-documentation of the progress so far also (thanks to Deepika , Yamini, Meenakshi and Sripad Sridhar). High school students Dyumaan, Christy and Aishwarya helped with making special name boards for the saplings.

The PWD has handed over the Tree Park to the Corporation to develop and Nizhal will continue to be closely involved in the creation of the Tree Park. A special Citizens Committee will be formed and Nizhal will ensure that the concept with which the Park was started will continue!. Our grateful thanks to Mr Premnath, AC, Zone IX, and landscape architects, Ms Vennila and Satish Moses for their support.



SIEMENS Project in Gandhi Nagar...a holistic neighbourhood initiative

Nizhal and Siemens worked on a year long unique neighbourhood initiative in Gandhi Nagar that officially ended early this year. The project involved educational institutions in the area and residents to make the area a model for the rest of Chennai. A Tree Guide and a Tree Survey guide have been published, and copies distributed to all schools. Around 100 saplings were planted across the neighbourhood in selected locations, a tree quiz was conducted followed by sharing of experiences by students and volunteers, drawing up of an action plan for a greener neighbourhood and distribution of certificates. A cycle rally was also held on 1st December in the area as part of the 'Go Green' initiative and involved students from educational institutions in the area.

Music CD release

A special Music CD on trees and nature, with songs selected and sung by Nizhal members was brought out, coordinated by Gayathree Krishna and Chithra Viswanathan. The album has 15 songs. The CD was officially released in the last Nizhal anniversary, but was available to the public only in April 2010, for a contribution of Rs. 100 only.

Free the Tree Campaigns

Popularly called FTCs, these campaigns have been conducted across the city for more than a year now with increasing participation - regularly in the areas of Alwarpet, Mandaveli, Ashok Nagar and Anna Nagar. The campaign thrives on the full-fledged involvement of local community (or residents), simultaneously liaising with corporation officials. The volunteers walk alongside avenue trees, removing nails that mostly hold advertisement boards. Each area has a group of people with a nodal person who coordinates the logistics of when, where and how the FTC is to take place and depending on the necessity of the FTC and volunteer availability, they are conducted weekly or bi-weekly. The participation of residents, auto drivers and shopkeepers in the area ensures the long-term awareness generated and enhances outreach. The most sustained FTC campaigns have been in the Alwarpet area, led by Vasanthi Rajiv. Kasi Raman, our Coordinator from Ashok Nagar, has coordinated FTCs with corporates like Virtusa too!

Nanmangalam Forest Program



Nizhal has tied up with the Forest Department to popularise the Nanmangalam Reserve Forest at Medavakkam, as great learning experience and to take the goodness of this forest to children from schools across the city.

This dense wetland-scrub forest spans over 320 hectares and is home to 85 species of birds and trees. The programme highlights the importance of trees, and creates an interest that will last long in their minds and hearts. A walk in the forest to identify species and record observations, an art workshop to make posters on a given theme, learning the process of growing a sapling are a few of the interactive activities with the children. Experienced coordinators facilitate and make these sessions a one-of-a-kind experience for these budding spirits.

The first program was for the NSN School, Chitlapakkam and the student response has been excellent.

Awareness Activities: Our Education Team – Prema Veeraraghavan, Chithra Viswanathan, Ambika Chandrasekar, Usha Pillai, Sheila Rajagopal, Asha Sampath, Latha Nathan, and Sumana Bhat will soon network in schools across the city to share and facilitate awareness on tree issues in sensitive meaningful ways.

Planting programmesMonitoring Networks, an important component!

Apart from planting as part of the afore-mentioned activities, Nizhal regularly engages in planting activities such as at the Police Commissioner's office, Egmore on 25th November. We have many advisors on location and site specific species and we encourage planting of native species that will also bring back associated wildlife like birds and butterflies. We also ensure that wherever saplings are planted, there are volunteers to tend to the saplings until old enough.

Greening Prisons across Tamil Nadu

One of our most rewarding projects till date, this started at the Puzhal prison, with the support of then IG Prisons, Mr R Natraj. Prisoners were engaged in gardening and greening activities in the campus. Since the start in November 2009, the prison has harvested over 1500kgs of various vegetables over the last 5 months.



Certificates for participation in horticulture training have been distributed to the participants.

Recently, with the support of Mr Tripathi, current IG, Prisons, we are have started on similar lines at the Cuddalore Jail and also plan to initiate the same in Trichy, Pudukottai, Vellore, Salem, Madurai, Coimbatore and Palayamkottai Prisons.

Our grateful thanks to Dr N.Dayanandam, our Advisor, and Dr T D Babu, the Coordinator of the program.

At the Vigilance Home

At the Government Vigilance Home for Women, in San Thome, residents were involved in planting and greening their barren campus. Two huge compost pits too were initiated, so that they could manage the biodegradable waste generated within the campus. Around 20 fruit trees and 25 shrubs were planted and their care monitored closely by our members, Prema Veeraraghavan and Helen Christy.

At the Institute of Mental Health

Our work at the IMH began in May 2010, after a preliminary meeting with the Garden Superintendent, the RMO and a few improved patients. The primary purpose of Nizhal's involvement was to have a kitchen garden developed at this beautiful campus as an occupational therapy. With the support of Dr. Kamleshwari-Botany Professor at Pachaiappas College, the NSS students of Pachaiappas College and DG Vaishnav College the Outpatient Wards' lawn area was cleared up completely and a vermicompost pit initiated. We hope that soon a garden will be developed there by the Chennai Corporation.

In the last few weeks we have seen much enthusiasm among the students who have been working under the guidance of Dr.Dayanandam in clearing overgrown weeds, transplanting a lawn, developing a vendai patch and of course interacting with the inmates. We have had Nizhal members from all over the city pitch in almost every Saturday at IMH - including Bharath, Ramya, Prakash, Raghu, Kasi Sir, Srihari, Priyadharcini, Gautam, Kailash and Geetanjilee.

Project Green Fire.... with the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services (TNFRS)



The most recent project, this involves simultaneous planned greening of 30 Fire and Rescue Stations simultaneously across Chennai... involving Fire and Rescue Dept. personnel, volunteers and Nizhal members. Pre and post orientations for children and Fire Officers from across districts were a notable feature too.

After the symbolic planting by the Director, Mr Natraj, TNFRS, of the Vanni (symbolizing Fire) and the Naval (symbolic of Water), school students gathered planted saplings the Indian Laburnum. All species chosen are indigenous, bird and butterfly attracting.

In stations where space was not available, cement pots were used to plant small trees like Mandharai.

Prior to planting, experts (Dr Dayanandam, retd Jt Dir of Agriculture, and Harish Krishnamurthy, horticulturist) had made individual site visits in north, central and south Chennai to provide plans for sensitive greening.

Students were also provided free saplings of trees and shrubs to green their campuses.

Soon after, Fire Officers across the State were also given a half day orientation on the right choice of species, the need for aftercare and sensitive planting and care, organic methods of care etc. at the Tambaram Training Centre.

Truly a spreading of the Green Fire in a sensitive earth friendly manner!

Tree Walks

A favourite with many, tree walks have been conducted steadily over the last 5 years!. This year, walks have been conducted at Guindy National Park, Nageshwara Rao Park, Birla Planetarium, St. Georges' cathedral, Journalists' Park at Thiruvanmiyur, among other areas of the city. These walks were conducted for Sankara School Adyar, Prakriti Foundation, Titan employees, other educational institutions and citizens, across all age groups. We also conducted a sketching session for kids at the end of one walk and this was very well received.

In June, Nizhal linked up with the Times of India for World Environment Day 2010, conducting walks in different locations across the city. This was a great platform to



interact with like-minded citizens of Chennai and welcome them into the Nizhal family. An incredible month indeed!

I week: At Boat Club (Adyar) by Ms. Chitra Viswanathan and Ms. Yamini Murali

II week: At Thiru V Ka Park (Shenoy Nagar) by Dr. Pauline

III week: At Nehru Park (Poonamallee Road) by Ms. Sri Valli

IV week: On Air Force Road (Tambaram) by Ms. Aruna

Tree Talks

Besides our popular Tree Walks, Nizhal initiated the concept of Tree Talks too this year! The public Talks serve to facilitate sharing experiences and discussions on knowledge about trees and their care in urban areas. The first of the talks was by renowned botanist, Dr. Narasimhan, Madras Christian College, held at the Birla Planetarium, Science City Campus, on "Trees – What they mean to us" ; the next was by Dr Pauline, from Womens Christian College, on Trees of Chennai.

Tree Act Advocacy

In order to have legislative support, we are also trying to bring in a Tree Act that will largely speak against illegal tree felling in public and private spaces. Nizhal has been repeatedly following up with various government departments, the last being the CM's Cell. Positive feedback has been received from the Urban Forestry Wing of the Forest Department of a move in the direction of a Tree Act for Tamil Nadu!

Interactions with educational/ other institutions... an important agenda

Nizhal has been involved in many outreach activities this year, aiming to sensitise young people and communities to caring for and speaking for trees around them! Interactions took place in the following institutions...through Talks, Walks, and interesting activity sessions;

- R K M School, T Nagar
- Vidya Mandir Mylapore School Fest,
- Hari Shree Vidyalayam,
- American International School,
- Patrician College
- The Good Earth School, Tambaram,
- NSS students in Pachiappas College,



- Sathyabama College of Engineering,
- Sakthi Engineering College, Thiruninravur
- Rajalakshmi Engineering College, Thandalam
- SSN College of Engineering
- SRM group of institutions
- Women's Christian College,
- Lioness Club of Tambaram East,
- International Women's Association.
- Anna University
- Madras Christian College, Department of Social Work

Beyond boundaries

We have received enquiries from other cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Bangalore to help initiate similar activities in their cities for the welfare of trees in urban areas!.

Nizhal Online

Venturing into the e-world with gusto has made Nizhal more accessible, user-friendly and informative through the website - www.nizhal.org.

We also have groups on popular social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter that help in reaching out to many people and sharing experiences and activities conducted by Nizhal.

The team which admirably takes charge of all activities online - Geetha Jayaraman, Mahadevan, Selvaraj, Dominic, Arati Krishnamurthy, Vaishnavi Srinivasan, Raghu Kumar.

Nizhal online monthly newsletter...Thanks to Vaishnavi Srinivasan, one of our young coordinators, the newsletter continues to receive many accolades!



A Nizhal Database...our comprehensive directory on facilities/ persons who can help network for trees is constantly being updated. So are the many new members who are joining us continuously! The Team who have been involved – Divya Ramesh, Deepika Sivanandam, Yamini Murali, Vaishnavi Srinivasan, Mahadevan, Rashmi Naresh and Geetha Jayaraman.

Overall, we would like to thank all volunteers and members of Nizhal, and online supporters too! Without their contribution none of the above activities would have been accomplished. We are also grateful to the Resource Persons who led many walks, gave talks and shared their advice and experiences. And our Advisors for their unstinted support!

Thank you very much for being part of the Nizhal movement!