



NIZHAL Annual Report 2014-2015

Welcome Friends!

We have gathered to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Nizhal. This wonderful journey has been possible solely due to the commitment of a great Team. This last year has seen many young volunteers energise this movement with their enthusiasm and persistence!

We deeply thank our Advisor Mr Sekar Raghavan, who initiated us on this journey, and remember with fondness and gratitude the unstinted support of our Chief Advisor, the late Mr G Dattatri!

Green Prison Programs...a MODEL for other cities!

Nizhal's landmark Green Prisons Program that works across all central prisons in Tamil Nadu has initiated organic farming practices and transformed both lands and minds. They produce vegetables and fruits and have their own brand of compost called "FREEDOM" manure that they produce by composting vegetable waste they generate and leaf litter. These are currently being marketed through Prison Bazaars across the State.

Techniques to produce "panchakavyam" and "amirthakaraisal" have been taught and health nurturing millets production is next on the agenda.

Nizhal has facilitated connections between the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University experts and the Prison Department in order to help in systematic transfer and facilitation of expertise.



We are deeply grateful to Mr J K Tripathy for his continued support. And also to the Vice Chancellor, TNAU, Mr K Ramasamy, for his timely mentoring. Our Advisor, Dr N Dayanandam, has been our constant support in this program.

Nizhal's work with Prisons across Tamil Nadu has become a model to emulate and outreach presentations have been shared with Heads of the Kerala Prisons and the Maharashtra Prisons Department.

Kotturpuram Tree Park –KTP

KTP has truly become a bio-diversity hotspot. It has not only over 600 trees of 150 different species but also supports a large variety of flora and fauna. Students from various schools and colleges and walkers across all ages find KTP unique! A well known macro photographer even won an international award for a fascinating photo of an insect from KTP!

This year, the “Asoka Vanam” process has begun.... towards the creation of a grove of the endangered Asoka trees! The herb garden inside is being cared for by various groups of volunteers - school children, corporate volunteers, general public and others.

Weekly programs were conducted for differently-abled children learning to be one with nature, de-weeding, watering, planting and gaining in confidence in the process. They worked with Kottur school children and this has bridged the gap between special kids and students from the corporation school which has imparted helping tendency or inclusive attitude among them . They have gained physically as well as emotionally by their gardening activities and this was the one activity that was most enjoyed by all students alike!



Advisors Mr Raghavendra Rao, G Ramakrishnan and Harish Krishnamoorthy have conducted diverse training sessions for various groups – composting, pruning and nursery raising.

Besides these, we have had various workshops

Shramdaan...a Community Volunteering Concept that inspires!

Dedicated Action Teams look into the needs of various Community Parks – Kotturpuram, Madhavaram, Perungudi and Chitlapaakkam. Our YuVa volunteer team is creating waves across the city spreading awareness about trees, tree care and prevention of tree abuse. Many school children, college students and corporate volunteers help out with weekly shramdaan activities.

Madhavaram Tree Park

Madhavaram Tree Park is slowly overcoming diverse challenges, thanks to some very dedicated people like Mr Ganesh Murthy, Sivaganesh, Reuben and officials from TANUVAS and AAVIN.

Jain Irrigation has very graciously agreed to sponsor the drip irrigation needed to water the young trees.

Chitlapakkam Tree Park

This park which was modeled after KTP has grown into a beautiful tree park because of sustained monitoring by residents living around it. Nizhal core team members Bhuvana and Raj spearhead the movement in their locality!

Velachery Tree Park

This little corporation park that was identified, cleared and greened by Gajendran and his friends is slowly growing into a nice shaded area.



Currently there are different ACTION TEAMS in each of these areas , who meet on weekends for shramdaan and inspire and involve neighbouring communities!

Free the Tree Campaign (FTC)

Year 10 has seen a remarkable growth in young volunteer base. The YuVa team has been working in a remarkably sustained fashion to protect trees and prevent tree abuse. The team has been spearheading Nizhal's signature campaign FTC (Free the Tree Campaign). Week after week since March 2015, every Sunday morning!

The FTCs got off to a great start with volunteers carefully planning their campaign with visually appealing posters. Hitesh, our new student volunteer, well mentored by Gajendran has been leading teams at various venues each week, since March.

Locations covered...

1. L B Road, Adyar
2. Indira Nagar
3. Kotturpuram
4. Besant Nagar
5. Adyar, Cancer Institute
6. Nageshwara Rao Park
7. Race Course
8. Mylapore
9. R A Puram
10. Mandaveli
11. Little Mount
12. Velachery
13. Gandhi Nagar
14. Adambakkam
15. West Mambalam



FTCs have been initiated in **Salem, Tenkasi** with the help of member Arunkumar Jeyaseelan. Other cities like **Thiruvananthapuram and Pune** too are following these ideas!

Tree Walks

This is a special feature of Nizhal that has brought awareness about trees to participants across all ages. Special walks include

- Trees in Music,
- Trees in Literature,
- Trees in Idioms and Proverbs,
- Trees in Classical Tamil Poetry,
- Story Trails,
- Seed Collection Trails.

Tree walks were conducted at various venues for various groups, including

1. INTACH
2. Independence Day Park at Valluvarkottam
3. National Public School
4. SRM College of Engineering
5. Sattva Media
6. Kids Central
7. Redwood Montessori School
8. Quaid-e-millath Govt College for Women
9. Panagal Park on Madras Day
10. My Lady's Garden, Periamedu for public on Madras Day
11. KFI School

Greening facilitation include

1. Ashok Leyland
2. Chennai Police Department Campus



3. Industrial Estate of Taramani
4. Corporation of Chennai Parks across several zones
5. Anna Nagar – roadside greening
6. Servion, Guindy
7. TVS, Dynamic
8. Blue Dart Express

With Government Departments

Nizhal works closely with senior officials of the **Corporation of Chennai** for facilitating more Community Parks and choosing appropriate avenue planting species.

Nizhal is in touch with the **National Highways Authority of India** for suggestion of species to be planted as avenue trees and to involve volunteers to monitor planting along highways across Tamil Nadu.

Persistent follow up from our team has ensured that State Highways Department has officially declared support for Nizhal and the mature trees along highways, to free them of advertisement boards!

Nizhal made a presentation to senior team members from various departments across Chennai, on the invitation of the **State Planning Commission**. We are deeply grateful to Ms Shanta Sheela Nair, Vice Chairman, for her warm hearted support!

Other programs

Nizhal's presence in social media is growing considerably...over 4000 members follow us on Facebook and we are constantly rising to the challenges of using this medium to sensitise public across generations!

- Workshop on Tree Pruning for staff of the Corporation of Chennai.
- Ms. Arundhati, a Personal Growth Trainer from Riyadh conducted workshops for Nizhal volunteers on the subject 'Challenges faced by volunteers working



in an NGO'. The objective was to promote team spirit, ways to leverage different perspectives and to collaborate for a common cause.

- Volunteer drive that began in Feb 2015 has brought in many resourceful and enthusiastic volunteers.
- YuVa team has regular training workshops that spur them onto more “green” challenges.
- Resource Persons Training Program saw a number of new participants wanting to learn and grow. Periodic training programs are in the offing!

Awareness orientations include

- Dhanapal College, Kelambakkam
- SDNB College, Chromepet
- Ethiraj College
- Queen Mary’s College
- Mindtree
- Infosys
- Urjanet, TIDEL Park
- Church Park Convent
- Vana Vani School, IIT
- Sivaswami Kalalaya
- Government Middle School, Arakonnam
- Corporation of Chennai, Ripon Buildings
- CoC, Central Zone

Corporate Volunteers reached out from

- ❖ TCS
- ❖ Accenture
- ❖ Corporate Executive Board –DLF Park
- ❖ Cognizant
- ❖ Beroe Inc
- ❖ DELL



❖ HCL

Tree Mapping

Tree mapping project has been completed in Chennai Corporation ward 176 with the support of TEEMS India, the first of its kind in Tamil Nadu. At the touch of a button, information on a particular tree can be accessed, and information on areas of potential planting measures to restore bio-diversity in areas that is lacking.

Talks are on with the Corporation of Chennai and TEEMS to further the tree mapping for the entire city of Chennai!

Sensitive Student Programs...

V Excel School students have been initiated into adopting corporation parks in their schools' vicinity in the Adopt a Park campaign!

Ananya School students from the Madras Dyslexia Association were oriented into "Mugam Marum Marangal" program at KTP with Nizhal Core team member Premakka.

Tiruvanmiyur Corporation School collaborated with Rotary Club of Madras East and Nizhal and planted several trees that will soon mature into a row of indigenous trees giving students the much needed shade.

Damodarapuram Corporation School is slated next for our Palliyil Nizhal Program. Nizhal has also facilitated connections between schools and institutions like the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) in areas like composting, vegetable gardening, herbal garden, mushroom cultivation.

Publications



Documentation of special tree species in large institutional campuses and across the city is an important part of its agenda, as a major step towards their protection and care. Our advisors Dr P Dayanandan and Dr D Narasimhan have been our mentors.

- A coffee table book called “Living Landmark Trees of Chennai” published in collaboration with Ms Chandra Sankar of Kalamkriya. We are in the process of putting up heritage tree boards with the permission of the Corporation of Chennai.
- The Living Landmarks have also been geotagged and are being incorporated into an App from Broadgate Technical Solutions which carries locations of landmark locations across Chennai!
- Documentation completed for trees on the campus of the Madras Club.
- Documentation of trees for the Tamil Nadu Golf Federation campus.

Seedling to Sapling – Adoption Drive

In a drive to reach out to urban citizens and involve them in the process of sensitive greening, a Seedling 2 Sapling Drive has been initiated. Indigenous species like Nochi, Boondhikottai, Veppalai, Thanakku etc have been raised and given for adoption within the community . They will be nurtured in their new families till they are about 3 ft tall and then returned for planting.

Friends of Chennai – Media Link to greening Chennai

The Hindu has linked up with Nizhal as part of its Friends of Chennai Campaign. The neighbourhood chosen is Mylapore. Over the next 8 weeks starting September 5th, volunteers will carry out FTCs, do Tree Surveys and involve citizens in regenerating biodiversity by planting and caring for Punnai and Magizham saplings.

Recognising Exceptional Volunteers -T Krishnarajan Memorial Award

Our award for 2015 for outstanding volunteer/s who have been helping Nizhal Selflessly in a committed and sustained way goes to



Hitesh Purohit, a student volunteer who has been spearheading FTC campaign across Chennai.

Mr Ganeshamurthy, a senior citizen, who has made an exceptional difference to the Madhavaram Tree Park!