

NIZHAL - ANNUAL REPORT
2018-2019

At the outset we thank our dedicated team and all volunteers who continue to be part of our green journey. We also wish to remember with fondness and gratitude, the guiding spirit of our Chief Adviser, the Late Mr. G Dattatri, and our Adviser Dr. Sekar Raghavan, who set us on this journey.

GREENING OF PUBLIC SPACES

MRTS STATIONS

Besides Kotturpuram, Mandaveli, Chintadripet and Taramani MRTS stations, the Velachery and Perungudi stations have also been added to the list of Green MRTS! Over 200 saplings of trees and shrubs were planted. Plants that were lost due to various exigencies at Taramani station, have been replaced with the help of student volunteers from across the city.

The MRTS journey has had its share of diverse challenges but the Nizhal Team moves ahead confidently in creating greener stations

**CANCER INSTITUTE CAMPUS,
Gandhi Nagar**

Bright flowering shrubs and tree saplings to increase green cover have been planted in the Cancer Institute premise in Adyar. Around 25 tree saplings and 50 flowering shrubs were planted and nurtured. Periodic shramdaans are held. We have also been able to bring in the sustained support student community from the St Louis School for the Deaf and the Blind, with the support of their Principal Bro. John Xavier and his Team.

**WARD
176**

The saplings planted along the roadside as part of greening process in Ward 176, Besant Nagar were carefully nurtured over the scorching summer by dedicated volunteers, who watered and weeded the saplings regularly. The happy result is that most of the saplings are striving well despite numerous challenges like water scarcity, vandalism, dumping of rubbish, re-laying of the footpath, etc.

GREENING OF PWD site along

O M R

PWD land along the Buckingham Canal has been greened in two phases. The first phase was completed with the planting and nurture of about 70 saplings, and second phase had another 70 saplings and over 80 flowering shrubs along the fence. The land which was being used as a dump has been given new lease of life and is already blossoming into a model green lung space!

Replacement of some saplings and strengthening the fence has been undertaken in phases and now this project has a total of about 145 saplings. Large numbers of butterflies and other insects, lizards and birds are seen regularly in this area now.

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 water bodies across Chennai with its flagship project at the Chitlapakkam Lake alongside 3rd Main Road, Chitlapakkam. The creation of the Nizhal Chitlapakkam Neer Vanam with its band of dedicated volunteers on the banks of this lake with local community involvement could be a possible model to tackle the perennial problem of cleanup, restoration of water bodies.

The project, that has completed three years, is a result of Nizhal's collaboration with the Local Panchayat, PWD and citizen groups like Chitlapakkam Rising.

Garbage dumping, vandalism, grazing have been the major hurdles and challenges faced. Undeterred, the dedicated team meets every weekend for a Pasumai Pani /Shramdaan session to nurture and protect them.

The involvement of the local community in caring for their own neighbourhood and water bodies is the biggest success of this project. The second Nizhal CNV Day was celebrated with a tree planting, tree walk and art program by children from the local community.

Parks Under Nizhal Care

The Greater Chennai Corporation has acknowledged the role of Nizhal in energizing key green spaces, one each in North and South Chennai - **Kotturpuram Tree Park (KTP)** in South Chennai and the historic **Maadi Poonga** in Royapuram.

Initiated in 2008 as a joint project of PWD, Nizhal, and Citizens Committee, to commemorate the 150th year of the PWD, **Kotturpuram Tree Park**, a former 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!

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

Students from various schools and colleges come to connect with nature and precious biodiversity, to watch and record / study butterflies, insects and birds. Visually challenged and hearing impaired students from St Louis School regularly attend our special Tree Walks at KTP. We thank the Savera Group of institutions for helping them with travel logistics.

An indigenous saplings nursery has been set up with funding from KLA Tencor and now has upward of 200 saplings. A model pond ecosystem has been created with help of volunteers.

Several workshops, tree walks, Pasumai-Pani / Shramdaan sessions, Corporate Volunteering sessions make KTP a model tree park and a vital biodiversity space. The Nizhal Team along with the community representatives from the Friends of Kotturpuram Tree Park are in charge of the maintenance of this precious biodiversity space.

An unfortunate incident of Chennai Corporation bulldozing 40 rare species of well grown trees and about 100 trees and shrubs in all, to make way for the building of a wall on canal bank, created an uproar in the community. Social Media and mainstream media spread the word and there was overwhelming condemnation of this thoughtless act.

Nizhal immediately sourced tropical dry evergreen forest species to be replanted and is now waiting for the Chennai Corporation to complete their work so that replanting and nurturing can happen again.

At Maadi Poonga, Nizhal guides the community onto nurturing and watching over the green space, and planning the next phase of rejuvenation. A government contractor currently helps in the upkeep of the site.

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

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

GREENING OF POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Nizhal undertook greening of the polytechnic campuses – Central Institute of Leather Technology, Central Institute of Textile Technology and Central Institute for Printing Technology in Taramani.

An initial survey was done in each campus, followed by planting of saplings with the students of each institute. Over 50 tree saplings and 75 shrubs were planted in these campuses.

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. Nizhal has provided seeds for their vegetable garden patch and it is heartwarming to know that they are harvesting healthy organic vegetables. Vermi-compost pit has been created for producing compost.

The Nizhal team continues to interact with the respective superintendents, for fresh strategies to rejuvenate the green project. Recent visits have been to Trichy and Coimbatore prisons.

In Coimbatore Open Air Jail campus, saplings of rare indigenous species have been sourced and planted. We hope to facilitate an indigenous tree sapling nursery in the site in the future. Near the Prison Bazaar and canteen, tall flowering tree saplings have been planted and are being nurtured.

TREE MAPPING IN PARKS

The expansion of CMRL has instilled a fear among the residents of loss of precious green lung space in their neighbourhoods. Nizhal is actively speaking to authorities and trying to minimize damage save

trees that could be axed due to these expansions. The phase II of the CMRL project which proposed a route through T Nagar, engendered a fear that this will affect the trees of Panagal and Natesan Parks.

Nizhal teamed up with TEEMS India, using GIS to map trees in these two parks which could face imminent threat. Students from the Ramakrishna Mission School were roped in to conduct the survey. Location, girth, height, species of all the trees in the two parks were recorded. This census will give the public an idea of the number of trees that are there in the parks that need to be protected. A record of their existence/ destruction will help in creating awareness and

protecting our green cover.

YUVA AND JUNIOR YUVA PROGRAMS

Youth Volunteers YuVa conduct tree protection activity “FTC” (Free the Tree) campaigns across city. This campaign has caught on in other districts in Tamil nadu and other Indian cities too.

Junior YuVa for children is inspiring young minds to think green. Hands on sessions help them to understand and celebrate trees and nature. Experts and knowledgeable enthusiasts from various fields share their skill and ideas with the children, linking greenery to different aspects of life.

TREE WALKS

Madras day tree walks, neighbourhood walks, walks for students, Corporate tree walks are becoming a popular way to reach out and bring more folks under the Nizhal umbrella.

Some walks held the past year include:

Madras Day Walks at Besant nagar, Mandaiveli, IMH Kilpauk, Nizhal CNV at Chitlapakkam, and KTP. Flower Trails walk at KTP. Monthly walks at - Prithvi Avenue-RA Puram, Keshava Perumal Puram, Sastri Nagar-Adyar, Shenoy Nagar, Mandavelipakkam.

Walks and students’ program at KTP for the following Educational Institutions -

1. Madhuram Narayanan Trust students did multiple sessions at KTP
2. The Indian Public School
3. National Public School
4. Abacus Montessori
5. Sprouts Montessori
6. Cultural Caravan
7. The Home-schoolers Guild
8. Valliammal School
9. Montford Siragugal
10. Lord’s School
11. Kalvi Koodam
12. Sishya School
13. Chennai High school
14. National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT)
15. Parkour Circle – tree climbing session

NIZHAL’S ADVISORY ROLE

An announcement made by the Greater Chennai Corporation regarding penalty for tree abuse is once again recognition for Nizhal's voice against tree abuse and its FTC activity

Nizhal was part of a steering committee to visit different forest types across Tamil Nadu along with the other panel members and to give our technical input on the eucalyptus plantation going on within the forest areas and outside as well.

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 would like to acknowledge with deep gratitude the overwhelming contribution of the KLA Tencor Team, who have supported the following projects in a very sustained way, not merely in the planting but in the aftercare too.

1. Greening of Tambaram Sanatorium
2. Greening at IMH, Kilpauk
3. MRTS greening at Chintadripet
4. Greening of MRTS Taramani
5. Sapling Nursery at KTP
6. Greening of MRTS Velachery
7. Greening of MRTS Perungudi
8. Greening of PWD land in OMR opp NIFT
9. Greening of the Central Polytechnic Campuses

TEEMS India partnered in the mapping at Natesan and Panagal Parks.

Chennai Willingdon Corporate Foundation has supported the greening of Women's ward at IMH.

Husqvarna sponsored power tools for KTP, and had a session training volunteers on how to use these tools. Freshworks sponsored the initial phase of the PWD site planting along OMR-Buckingham canal.

We also have many corporate employees volunteering in our Pasumai Pani / Shramdaan sessions, or attending our awareness programs.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Nizhal has an active presence in Social media. All our planting sites have a WhatsApp group to

monitor the wellness of the saplings on a daily basis. We also reach out via Facebook, Google & Yahoo groups, instagram and Twitter. Our website is currently being restructured to reach a wider audience.

Thank you all for being our key supporters in this challenging journey!