Congratulations, Small Group Members,
you have more than 3.5 lakhs trees + seedlings

Develop a Covenant for Your Small Group

Developing and living with a covenant is an important best practice for your Small Group. To develop a covenant, the members of each TIST Small Group need to discuss and agree on a list of group values, expectations and behaviors. It is very important that everyone in the group understands and agrees upon the guidelines of the covenant. Your Small Group then agrees to abide by the covenant you have developed, to live in community, and to hold each other accountable to do the things you have agreed to do.
The whole group must build the covenant, not the leader. It should reflect values of openness, acceptance, accountability, confidentiality, and membership. Your covenant should also make clear the logistics of attendance, rotating leadership, and place, time and frequency of meeting. It can outline goals and tasks of the group. Each group’s covenant will be unique to that group and will contain what the members of the group think is most important for the spiritual and working life of the group.

It works best to agree on the basic guidelines of the covenant at the first or second meeting of your Small Group. If something comes up later, it can always be added. If your Small Group has been meeting and doesn’t have a covenant yet, don’t worry. Now is a good time to create one.

Covenants are based on love and loyalty and only work if all parties seek to live by the covenant guidelines. Having a covenant and abiding by it creates trust, openness and safety within the group.

An important part of a Small Group’s covenant is confidentiality. In order for the group to be a safe place, there must be agreement on confidentiality. Nothing that is shared within the group should be discussed with anyone outside the group. People will then feel confident to be more open and honest about the struggles in their lives.
Quantification

Individuals coming together to form Small Groups and follow "Small Group Best Practices" encouraged by TIST has developed solidarity among the 2300 members of 235 registered Small Groups of TIST India. The ultimate commitment of the Small Groups is to remove carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere by planting trees. The accurate measurement of CO2 decrease from the atmosphere requires careful counting of trees planted by the Small Group members.

On the visit of the TIST Quantifier/Auditor to the village for Quantification, the members of the Small Groups should personally lead the Quantifier/Auditor to their groves and they are advised to help the Quantifier/Auditor on quantification work. While on quantification, if a member is not available, then the other members should accompany the Quantifier/Auditor to all the groves of their Small Group.

With the help of a GPS (Global Positioning System), the Quantifier marks the exact location in the world (longitude & latitude) of the grove on a small computer that would fit on your Palm and this computer is also called a Palm. Once the location of the grove is marked in the Palm Equipment, the details of the trees like, Species, Age, Height and Thickness are measured and recorded, and Spacing between trees in the grove is also measured to see whether the tree will have adequate space to grow in full size.
After measuring the distance of water source from the grove, number of trees present, number of trees harvested, number of trees thinned and number of trees died are worked out to ascertain the growth of the trees in the groves, and to see the spontaneous dedication of the Small Group members towards the tree planting program of TIST.

The tree data recorded in the Palm Equipment is sent to the TIST - Head Office in America immediately by way of computer transmission. With this, the data on the Small Groups’ trees are instantly available all over the world through the Internet (World Wide Web) at the website address http://www.tist.org
This data is also analysed by the TIST Analysts in America to calculate the CO2 sequestration from the atmosphere achieved by the trees planted by the Small Groups.

A perfect Quantification not only helps in analysing the CO2 sequestration in atmosphere, but it also helps the Small Group members to receive voucher payments for their trees.

**Node (No.1) TIST Service Center at Molachure - First Meeting**

This first Node (TIST Service Centre for Molachur), which was started at Chittoor in June 2004, is now in function. Members of all the Small Group members that come under Nandimedu, Chittoor, Kantoor and Sugandi are requested to make use of this Node to all intents and purposes with regard to TIST Program.
Node - opening meeting was held on 29.06.2004. Presently, the Chittoor Government School has been selected as the Node Centre. All the Small Group members and few enthusiastic non-members of Chittoor village assembled at the Node at 3.45 pm and the meeting started at 4 pm. The Project Manager, TIST India, gave a detailed talk on Tree Planting Program of TIST. The usefulness of Tree Quantification was explained along with a demo on Palm Equipment, GPS and Digital Camera. The Voucher Payment structure was explained.

TIST Small Groups Welcome Pack and Chezhumai (News Letter) were distributed to all the Small Group members and non-members.

Mr. Ranganathan, Agriculture Officer of Kanchipuram District, explained the gathering on the usefulness of planting trees, and he also insisted the gathering to destroy individualism. Every member in the meeting was given enough time and chance to come out with his or her ideas. There were more than 40 attendees including the non-members. Only 5 women members were present. TIST requests all the women members of TIST Small Groups to participate in all meetings and bring out their ideas/views pertaining to TIST Program. All the members commonly agreed to have their Node open on 3rd Sunday in every month and also they also agreed to handover the SGMR in time. TIST once again requests all the Small Group members to make use of this Node for submitting their SGMRs, collecting their vouchers, collecting their copy of Chezhumai, asking questions about TIST to the TIST staff or to other group members, sharing best practices and any other TIST needs.
Node (No.1) TIST Service Center at Molachur - Second Meeting

As agreed by the Small Groups of Chittoor to have their Node meeting on every third Sunday, the 2nd Node meeting of this Centre was held on 18th July 2004. Interestingly, all the Small Groups of Chittoor participated in good strength. Chittoor Village was always an example for the other villagers to start Tree Planting with TIST Program. To give a clear knowledge about the TIST Program in Chittoor to the other villages, TIST invited the Small Group Members of neighbouring villages to participate in the 2nd Node Meeting of Molachur Centre. Small Group Members of Suseeappa & Jasmine (of Molachur), Aseeamman, Aseeaman Arumugam, Ganga, Ponniamman, Sakthi (of Kantoor) and Perumal (Marudham) had participated in the meeting. The Small Group Members of Chittoor displayed their bank/post office pass book to the other Small Group Members to show their voucher payments received from TIST. All of them were taken round to all the groves of Chittoor Small Groups. All the invitee Small Group Members were encouraged well.

During the meeting the Small Group Members decided to: (1) meet regularly with the other Small Group Members; (2) requested TIST for a training program on growing trees; (3) exchanging of sapling to eradicate monoculture.
Results of Node (No.1 - Molachur)

The first Node Meeting for Molachur Centre resulted in opening of more Nodes at different centres to serve the Small Groups effectively.

The second Node Meeting of Molachur Centre stimulated many Small Group members to open an account in post office / bank for TIST Voucher Payment.

Couple of new families from Chittoor joined in the TIST Small Groups with a tremendous opening of 70,000 curry leaf saplings.

Node (No.2) - TIST Service Center at Mel Kodungalur

Look forward to have a comprehensive article on this Node - Service Center in our next issue, in which, the whereabouts, activities and programs of this Node (No.2) will be well-defined.
On 08.02.04, one of the members of Cauvery Group of Chittoor Village showed us their 3-acre dry land, where they were planning to plant trees for the TIST Program. Highly encouraged by the other Small Groups of Chittoor Village like, SinduKavi, Chamundhi and Sampangae, this Group has also started to plant trees. In the month of May 2004 they have seeded the Casuarina seeds and now the seedlings are more than 10 cm in height.

All the members of this Small Group are highly excited in planting trees under the TIST Program. Very soon, these seedlings will be transplanted to their 3-acre dry land. The members of this Small Group showed their liveliness by joining the June month Node meeting at Molachur and demonstrated their ideas to the other members.

TIST India
1. Mr. Prabakar Srinivasan, Project Manager
2. Mr. A. Joseph, TIST Coordinator and Correspondent