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Amid The COVID-19 Crisis, Grow-Trees.Com Planted 26 Lakh Trees And Created Jobs

The organisation Grow-Trees.com planted about 26 lakh trees and provided employment opportunities amid the reverse migration during the COVID-19 pandemic in India

Coronavirus Outbreak | Written By: [Aishwarya Upadhyay](#) | Edited By: [Sonia Bhaskar](#)
| March 16, 2021 12:35 PM | 0



Grow-Trees.com provides 'Greet with Trees' service that allows individuals and corporates to commemorate special occasions by planting trees on behalf of their family, friends or employees
Image credit: grow-trees.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 People in rural areas planted trees which helped them get jobs amid COVID
- 2 The project was carried out in 23 states of the country
- 3 Thousands of people participated in the plantation virtually

New Delhi: In the year 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an unprecedented crisis in terms of health, economy and isolation faced by people due to lockdowns to control the outbreak. For the rural communities in India, it was a phase of acute economic distress, unemployment and hardships. At a time like this, one social enterprise, was not just greening eroded tracts of community land and replenishing water bodies, but also supporting rural communities to earn their livelihood with dignity.

Over 26 lakh trees were planted across 23 states of India in 2020 with the help of locals and migrants fleeing to villages from cities due to the shutdown of all economic activities. Grow-Trees.com, a social enterprise provides a one-of-a-kind 'Greet with Trees' service that allows individuals and corporates to commemorate special occasions by planting trees on behalf of their family, friends or employees. These trees get dedicated by a user and then planted in projects initiated by the organisation in the rural parts of India.

Thousands of individuals across the globe participated in this plantation drive by virtually adopting these trees and using a unique method for sustainable gifting.

In this way, the organisation not only provided immediate employment opportunities but also allowed the people who planted these trees to extract benefits in the form of fruit, fodder and other forest produce by selling these.

Bikrant Tiwary, the CEO of Grow-Trees.com told NDTV that the most rewarding aspect of this entire process is that, at a time when farming and plantation have become mostly mechanised, Grow-Trees.com was able to provide livelihood opportunities to pandemic hit villagers by engaging them in work that not just benefits them but also the environment they live in. He said,

“ We are happy that despite difficulties in 2020, we were able to extend our umbrella of projects to 23 states of India, helped rural communities in their time of need, and generated workdays for them. The plantation drives also improved the environment in tangible ways. Water tables are expected to rise due to the growing vegetation, conflicts between humans and animals are reduced, and villagers could grow inexpensive fodder for their cattle instead of having to buy it. In different states of India local species of trees were planted in collaboration with corporate partners for the benefit of local topography and communities. Growing more trees also helped the animal habitats to thrive.

These trees were planted in the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary in Jharkhand among various other national sanctuaries, rural areas and reserve forests in about 23 states of the country.

Dalma Wildlife Reserve's Gram Pradhan, Devendra Singh told NDTV about how the plantation drives helped the rural communities, he said,

“ Not only have the trees helped to stop the elephants from raiding our crops, the improved ecosystem gives economic sustenance to villagers. Not to mention, employment opportunities to those who need it the most.

Reserve's Supervisor Surinder Mahto told us that about 150 people are employed in the plantation drive from his village.

“ After the hardship inflicted by COVID-19, the poverty-stricken villagers are finally getting economic sustenance. In my village, here in Jharkhand, over 150 men and women are working in the plantation drive and getting extensive support to earn their living. At a time like this, this work has been of great help to us. Also, the plants will not just help us by providing us with fodder, crops and other produce in future but also improve the environment. I work here as the supervisor and oversee all the work. The villagers will continue to take care of the trees and protect them from any foreseeable danger.

Mr Tiwary said that they are hopeful of continuing the initiative in 2021 and aim to plant 7 million trees in the coming monsoon.

“ Grow-Trees.com will continue to support communities in need while also providing individuals and corporates with the opportunity to plant trees in public lands, near wildlife habitats, communal holy places, schools and government-owned deforested or denuded areas.

During the pandemic, the organisation also provided dry ration kits to over 400 households near plantation sites in Maharashtra, which were sufficient for about 64,000 meals. Furthermore, training programs in fishery and bee-keeping skills were also initiated to generate immediate employment avenues, Mr Tiwary said.

While Mr Tiwary declined to share the monetary income earned by the community members, citing privacy policy, he revealed that the initiative as generated about 600,000 working days. He said,

“ We believe in creating holistic impact on our biodiversity, starting with generating direct employment for the rural communities. They are involved in all stages of the plantation process, earning extra income from the work. We have generated about 600,000+ workdays of employment via our plantation initiatives. Further, these trees will not only benefit the environment but will also help the community members earn from their produce. The communities can consume the produce or sell them in the local market, once the trees are mature and are bearing fruit and other produces.

NDTV - Dettol Banega Swasth India campaign is an extension of the five-year-old Banega Swasth India initiative helmed by Campaign Ambassador Amitabh Bachchan. It aims to spread awareness about critical health issues facing the country. In wake of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the need for WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) is reaffirmed as handwashing is one of the ways to prevent coronavirus infection and other diseases. The campaign highlights the importance of nutrition and healthcare for women and children to prevent maternal and child mortality, fight malnutrition, stunting, wasting, anaemia and disease prevention through vaccines. Importance of programmes like Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-day Meal Scheme, POSHAN Abhiyan and the role of Aganwadis and ASHA workers are also covered. Only a Swasth or clean India where toilets are used and open defecation free (ODF) status achieved as part of the Swasth Bharat Abhiyan launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, can eradicate diseases like diarrhoea and become a Swasth or healthy India. The campaign will continue to cover issues like air pollution, waste management, plastic ban, manual scavenging and sanitation workers and menstrual hygiene.