

The International Small Group and Tree Planting Program (TIST) Procedures for Registered Small Groups

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being registered as a Small Group with the TIST Program. This document explains the procedures that Small Groups follow to benefit from the TIST Program. All the members in your small group should thoroughly review these procedures and understand them. Please ask your local TIST organizer any questions you may have on these procedures

REVIEWING AND UNDERSTANDING THE WELCOME PACKET

Now that you are a registered TIST Small Group, you must be anxious to find out what you should do next. In your welcome packet you will find several fact sheets. These fact sheets explain important steps in the TIST Program. Examples are how to:

- select and find seeds and seedlings,
- develop nurseries,
- prepare land and transplant seedlings,
- work effectively in Small Groups and share best practices,
- manage your TIST finances and
- start to do conservation farming.

Your local TIST organizer will explain the fact sheets. After this is done, all members of your Small Group should carefully review all of the fact sheets to understand the details.

It is important to ask your local TIST organizer any questions you may have on the details in the fact sheets.

GROUP PHOTO

After your registration is complete, your local TIST organizer will take a group photo that includes all members of your Small Group. Work with the organizer in scheduling a time for this and ensure that all members of your Small Group are present at that time for the picture to be taken.

BEGINNING SMALL GROUPS

Small Group members work together to do the TIST work. Members encourage each other. Members check that each other is doing the work they agreed to do. They divide responsibilities. All members have good ideas to share with each other. All TIST Small Groups should work effectively amongst its members based on the guidance provided in the *Working in Small Groups Fact Sheet*. This will involve meeting regularly and maintaining logs that record results of the meetings and other group activities.

Small Groups can share ideas with other Small Groups what they have learned. This is one reason why TIST works so well. The program staff will not tell you everything to do. TIST will make it possible to share information with many other Small Groups around the world!

NURSERY DEVELOPMENT

You are now ready to start your work as a TIST Small Group.

You should begin by selecting the types of trees you wish to plant and finding seeds for those tree types. Please refer to the *Seeds and Seedling Fact sheet* for guidance on how to select and find seeds. Once you have obtained seeds, begin developing a nursery where you will plant the seeds in plastic bags or containers. Please refer to the *Nursery Fact sheet* for guidance on good nursery development techniques.

SMALL GROUP REPORTS

In your welcome packet you will find six copies of the *Small Group Report* form. This form will be a very important conduit of information from the Small Groups to TIST. At the end of every month, you should fill out the *Small Group Report* form based on the activities recorded in the log maintained by your group. To fill this out:

1. Keep a log of your Small Group meetings.
2. Each month make sure to count the new and existing seedlings and trees planted by your group.
3. Report the information on the Small Group Report.

You should ensure that the number of trees and seedlings you report every month are very accurate. TIST will make your payments based on the numbers you report on the *Small Group Reports*. TIST will also conduct random and annual audits of your seedling and tree plantings to verify the accuracy of your reports. Inaccurate or false reporting on *Small Group Reports* will result in penalties on tree payments or disqualification from the TIST program.

You should submit the filled out *Small Group Report* form for the previous month to the local TIST organizer by the 7th of every month. For example you should submit the form that has the information for October to the organizer by the 7th of November. Ask the TIST organizer what the schedule will be for meeting the Small Groups to get these forms. If your Small Group does not submit Small Group Reports in a timely manner there will be delays on tree payments. At least two group members should be present to submit the Small Group Report to the organizer. At the end of every five months, request the local TIST organizer for additional copies of blank *Small Group Report* forms.

PAYMENT FOR TREES AND MANAGING FINANCES

TIST will make payments for the trees and seedlings that you plant as described in the *Small Group Offer* document. Payments will be made once every quarter (3 months) and will be based on the tree and seedling data you report on your Small Group Reports. In order for TIST to make quarterly payments, you should open an account at your local bank. Payments from TIST to Small Groups will be made after you have opened a bank account.

- Contact your bank officials about details of opening an account for a Small Group. TIST staff will provide information too.
- Open one account for your entire group that can be jointly operated by all group members.
- Ask the bank officials about procedures to operate your account to withdraw money, make deposits etc.
- Ask questions of the officials and ensure that all group members understand the procedures to operate the account.

Once you have opened the account, report the account number on the next *Small Group Report*. Quarterly payments for your trees and seedlings will be directly deposited into your bank account by TIST. These deposits will be made by 30 days after the end of the quarter. Please refer to the *Savings and Finances Factsheet* included in your welcome packet for additional details on good practices to manage your bank account and finances.

TIST will give you a *Quarterly Tree and Accounts Statement* once each quarter. This Statement will include details about your trees and seedlings, how your quarterly payment was calculated, and the payment amount deposited into your group's account for that previous quarter. One copy of the statement will be provided for each group.

1. Send two group members to collect the quarterly statement for your group from the local TIST organizer.
2. Review the Statement with all members of your group to make sure it is accurate.
3. Bring any questions immediately to the local TIST organizer.
4. Decide in your group what to do with the money!

When someone goes to the bank, take the Quarterly Tree and Accounts Statements. Check the deposits against the Statements. Notify the Bank and the TIST organizer if there are any problems.

RANDOM AND ANNUAL AUDITS

TIST will conduct routine annual audits and surprise random audits of your nursery and tree plantings. Random audits will be conducted by your local TIST organizer or other TIST program staff. Annual audits will be conducted by either external agencies or by auditors employed by TIST. Auditors may use handheld computers and other technological devices to quantify the trees and seedlings planted by you. Auditing is done to monitor the survival and growth of your seedlings and trees so that Greenhouse Gas pollution reduction can be quantified. Auditing is also done to verify that the data you report on *Small Group Reports* is accurate.

You should fully co-operate with auditors and help them conduct the audits in an efficient manner. Small Groups will direct the auditors to all the sites where each member planted seedlings and trees. Failure to audit certain sites may result in reduced tree payments to your Small Group.

At least one group member should accompany the auditors during the survey to help them locate all the plantings done by your group.

1. Request the auditor to show you their identification and verify that they are authorized by TIST to audit your plantings.
2. Provide the auditors with information about your Small Group such as group name, group number, species planted, planting dates etc.
3. Show the auditors the group activities log maintained by your Small Group
4. Take the auditors to ALL nurseries and tree planting areas.
5. Review the numbers that the auditors count. Discuss if their results are different from your numbers.
6. Sign a form when you agree with the Auditor's count.

The auditors are there to help you benefit from the TIST Program and therefore please be friendly, courteous and helpful to them in doing their job. Feel free to ask the auditors any questions without interfering in their work. If you have any concerns about certain auditors, please feel free to contact your local TIST organizer and express those concerns.

PLANTING TREES

As your seedlings grow to the appropriate size and as you near the rainy season, you should plan and begin activities to transplant your seedlings into your land. Please refer to the *Land Preparation Fact Sheet* and the *Transplanting Fact Sheet* for detailed guidance on proper procedures to plant trees.

BASELINE PHOTOS

Photos of your land need to be taken before you transplant seedlings or in the first 6 months after transplanting. These photos are needed to demonstrate the contribution of the TIST Program in reforesting your area. You should ensure that the local TIST organizer takes baseline photos of the lands where you intend to transplant seedlings. Please meet the organizer well before you plan to begin transplanting and request him/her to take baseline photos of your land. Note down the details of the transplanting activities of your group in the activities log and also report important details on your *Small Group Report*.

IDENTIFYING AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES

One of the principal aspects of the TIST Program is the empowerment of Small Groups to identify, through hands on experience on various aspects of the project, best practices appropriate for the local circumstances that could be adopted by other program participants. Identification and sharing of best practices is a very powerful tool as it enables Small Groups to avail from the hands on experience and intellect of a much vaster group of people beyond just the members in their respective groups. Please refer to the *Identifying and Sharing Best Practices Fact Sheet* in your welcome packet for detailed guidance on how your group can identify and share best practices.

First step in sharing Best Practices is to do so amongst your group members. You should discuss during weekly Small Group meetings any best practices identified by certain group members. If group members concur then Best Practices should be reported on *Small Group Reports* as well. Also when

you meet members from other groups, tell them about the Best Practices identified by your group and ask them about any Best Practices they may have identified. The local TIST organizer will also organize meetings and seminars for sharing Best Practices which will be attended by several Small Groups in your area. You should talk about and explain the Best Practices identified by your Small Group during such seminars. You should also carefully take note of the Best Practices identified by other Small Groups and implement those in the operation of your groups in TIST activities. You should also refer to the *Identifying and Sharing Best Practices Fact Sheet* that is included in your welcome packet for detailed guidance on this very important aspect of the TIST Program.

NEWSLETTER

TIST publishes a monthly newsletter that covers the activities in TIST projects worldwide including the project in your area. Newsletter articles will include important news about TIST worldwide and locally, announcements of upcoming events, reports on completed events, new and changed procedures, Best Practices identified by various groups both locally and worldwide, articles featuring certain groups that have performed well, trends on how groups are performing based on *Small Group Reports* data etc. The newsletter will therefore be a very important conduit of information from TIST to the Small Groups and from Small Groups to other Small Groups local and worldwide.

Occasionally you may encounter TIST program staff or reporters working on developing articles for the Newsletter who may wish to interview and or photograph you and your planting sites. Please cooperate fully with any such efforts and always remember to ask for a photo identification of any person who claims to be authorized by TIST. Also if your group has any ideas for articles that could be featured in the newsletter, do not hesitate in suggesting those ideas to your local TIST organizer, or you can report your ideas on the *Small Group Reports*.

Newsletters will be available from the 5th of every month and you should be able to pick them up from your local TIST organizer when you submit the monthly *Small Group Report*. You will get one copy of the newsletter for each group member. At least two group members should be present to collect the newsletters from the organizer on behalf of all your group members. Newsletter articles will appear in both English and the local language in all copies.

COMMUNITY NODES

TIST will keep recruiting Small Groups in your area. To serve the groups, TIST will send staff on a regular schedule to a center point in your area for a few days. We call this a "Community Node." The Community Node will be in walking or bicycling distance from your group.

TIST staff will be able to collect and give out information at the Community Node. Small Groups will their *Small Group Reports* every month and collect newsletters and *Quarterly Tree and Accounts Statement*. *Small Groups can share* Best Practices with other groups and TIST staff.

TIST will provide you with more details about the functioning of Community Nodes as we get closer to establishing them in your project area.

CONSERVATION FARMING

In addition to reforestation, TIST encourages Small Groups to implement improved conservation farming techniques. Conservation farming increases the amount of food off the same acres of land. It helps people live longer on the same acres of land. Please refer to the *Conservation Farming Factsheet* included in your welcome packet for guidance on improved techniques on this issue. TIST encourages each Small Group to allocate at least 1 acre of their land that will be used for implementing conservation farming practices. Small Groups should report details of conservation farming techniques implemented by them and the results from such activities on their *Small Group Reports*.

MENTORING GROUPS

TIST will reward Small Groups that perform well in TIST by becoming a Mentor Group. Mentor Groups may recruit new groups and mentor them. They are responsible for the work of the groups they recruit. Mentor Groups earn bonus revenue, in addition to their own tree payments, for every Small Group that

they recruit. Mentor Groups will receive a payment worth 10% of the tree payments made to the new groups they recruit. New groups get their full payment and Mentor Groups get an addition of 10% of what the new groups get.

Only certain Small Groups which have done extremely well for a year will be selected by TIST to become Mentor Groups. Groups must do well in planting and maintaining seedlings and trees, submitting reports, sharing best practices, and working effectively in Small Groups.

Becoming a Mentor Group comes with more money, but also more responsibility. Mentor Groups will guarantee the accuracy of the data reported on the Small Group Reports by the groups they mentor. Mentor Groups would also be responsible for ensuring that the groups they recruit maintain a certain minimum number of live trees and seedlings.

TIST will provide more details about the responsibilities of and incentives to Mentor Groups to those groups that are selected to become Mentor Groups at the end of the first year. If the opportunity to become a Mentor Group excites the members in your group, then you should make sure that your group performs very well during the first year so that it is selected by TIST to be a Mentor Group.

TRAINING

As a TIST group you will also be provided with training so that you can function efficiently in the various aspects of the TIST Program. You will be provided with training on good nursery development practices, land preparation and tree planting techniques, working effectively in Small Groups, identifying and sharing Best Practices, banking and managing finances, using computers and other technology, conservation farming techniques and several other issues. Training will be provided by local TIST trainers, other local external trainers and TIST trainers from worldwide locations. Some of the training workshops will be held in central locations and other training will be provided at the Community Nodes. Training may be provided to the entire group or to representatives from each group on a rotating basis. You will be informed about upcoming training sessions through the newsletter, directly by the local TIST organizer or at the Community Nodes.

Congratulations once again and welcome to TIST.