Strategy of TIST for betterment of Small Group Members

The TIST Small Group Members have willingly and purposefully agreed on the following strategy, the best practices of TIST in addition to planting trees.

1. Meet weekly for at least 2 hours.
2. Have a leader and a co-leader for every meeting.
   • Each session’s leader is a servant to the group, not the “boss”, the “chair” or the “teacher”. He or she is there to serve and support the group members as they discuss and agree on tasks. The leader should be humble, accepting, patient, honest, and transparent. The leader of each session should encourage others to talk rather than be the one talking.
   • The co-leader helps the leader by keeping time during the meeting and supports the leader and the group in any other way needed.

Wish you all a Happy & Prosperous Tamil New Year. May the Almighty Bless you all with good rain and may your fields transform into evergreen fields.
3. Rotate who leads the meeting every week. There should be a different leader and co-leader than the week before. This is very important. Rotating leadership gives everyone a chance to be leader and co-leader. By doing this, every group member will have a chance to contribute his or her talents to the group, and will gain confidence as a servant leader.

4. Have a schedule for each group meeting.
   • Meetings should begin and end on time.
   • At the beginning of each meeting, the group should re-agree on the tasks for that meeting, and make changes in the schedule if needed.

5. Have a time of “building up” at the end of each group meeting.
   • Be sure to schedule time for this.
   • Every person in the group must say one specific, positive statement about something the group leader did at that meeting or how the group leader conducted himself or herself. This is not optional.
   • After that, any group member may point out a specific talent that the group leader has and showed during the meeting. This is optional.
   • “Building up” works hand in hand with rotating the leadership of the meetings. It also trains group members to look for positive things, and speak them out. “Building up” also trains the group what that group thinks is important in leading. Each new leader has the benefit of learning from “building up” of previous leaders.

6. The leader and co-leader for that week need to set up the space for the group meeting (remember, sit in a small circle with no table), and choose a song to sing when the group gathers.
TIST Small Groups have a ‘covenant’ that is an agreement about their values, goals, and behaviors. The groups decide where and what time they will meet. They discuss and decide what are the main things they want to accomplish in the group in addition to planting trees, and how they will let others know the “best practices” they discover in the work they do together.

TIST - One more Step

TIST has stretched the tree planting program and best practices in 21 villages in Tamil Nadu and had registered 235 small groups under 7 different group centers.

The new strategy of TIST Program is to implement Nodes, a serviced center, wherein the small group members will meet the TIST Coordinator to handover their monthly SGMR. Monthly News Letter (Chezhumai) can be collected from the Nodes. At these serviced Node centers, TIST provides small group members with various training exercises.

The Nodes, which will be sited at easily accessible place, will be open for 2 days in a month. The TIST Coordinator of a group center will also be the in-charge of servicing Nodes in the group centers. TIST invites suggestions on Nodes from the small group members for the location of the Node, selection of Coordinator and the serviceable activities of Node.

TIST Activities at Melapulam

Nandha Group of Peruvalayam Village

Mrs.Kamalammal, 72 year old woman, an active member of this group is in full pride to be in a TIST Small Group at her age. Mr.Alwarnaidu and Mrs.Chinnapapa, who are also more than 70 years, are also the main cooperative members of this group. Truly, all the members of this group are the senior citizens, who have seen the ecological change due to cut down of trees and they are in full zeal to heal the atmosphere by planting trees.
The result of best practices had tuned these group members to such an extent that, even the used polythene covers of food items are effectively used for seedlings. They do not possess large land area, but the little area around their home is properly used for planting trees. Despite their age, they carry water from a distant place in a mud pot and keep their seedlings and trees healthy and green. There are 45 Casuarina, 15 Eucalyptus, 10 Teak Trees and more than 250 seedlings under the handworks of these senior citizens. Mrs.Kamalammal says that, "with the help of TIST, we will set an example for the upcoming small groups to go with TIST tree planting program endlessly."

**TIST India**

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