

One Million Trees

A project for the residents, for the farmers, for the women of our target group, for the schools and the temples of the villages in the Jalihal region of India

The One Million Trees project will last until 2024. These are the goals:

- One million trees and shrubs grow in the area
- The micro climate and soil fertility have improved
- The health of the population has increased
- The inhabitants of the region have become more energetic
- Mutual cooperation and water management are emerging
- Villages in the area are now also planting trees and shrubs

Issue

Our work area has a hot and dry climate. The soil is poor because far too much fertilizer has been used in the past. In addition, climate change is already severely affecting the region. The prospects for farmers are therefore not good and they are now aware of this.

Possible solution

The only way to turn that tide is to plant trees. But then there must be many. Then there will be a better microclimate under the trees. It then becomes cooler, strong wind is slowed down by the trees and the roots of trees retain rain for a long time.

And then

And then there comes this project: One Million Trees. All farmers in the surrounding area will be informed because YPS¹⁾ is widely known throughout the region. YPS has already carried out various projects with many farmers; in their own experimental farm and also with the farmers on their land. The same YPS has now started a project that will take years and for which they can attract a lot of money through the Jalihal Foundation, which is no longer unknown in the region. This is the chance, everyone feels that. And so there are many requests, also from surrounding villages.



Team meeting YPS

Gather all forces

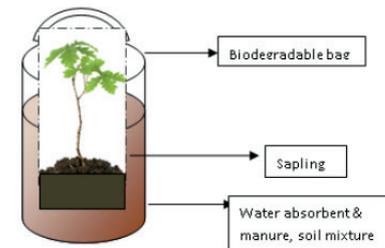
For such a large agricultural project, it is necessary that farmers stand behind it as one man. That requires strong leaders. And it is precisely this role that YPS takes on. She gives the farmers the confidence to join the project. YPS has the overview, can think ahead, keeps an eye on quality, has a long breath, and can also plan things. The farmers in the entire region sense this and YPS radiates that too. At the same time, YPS stands in the middle of the farmers. That is why YPS does not have to look for farmers, they come to enroll themselves and ask their neighbors to participate. Each participant is held responsible for her/his share in the project.

¹⁾ YPS is the abbreviation for Yerala Projects Society (<https://yeralaproject.in/directory/>).

It is headquartered in Sangli and has a branch office in Jalihal Village, the center of our working area. YPS has been our permanent partner since 2004, the start of our cooperation.

The practice of the participants

Now we are going to look at it in practice: 950 farmers, 35 women from our original target group and 15 local communities. First they follow a training, mainly to become familiar with the new crops that are used in the project. Everyone receives a printed manual in which each species is depicted and described. Then the many large and small stones are removed and the soil is loosened as much as possible to hold water. More oxygen enters the soil so that more micro mechanisms can grow. Then the participants dig the holes where the trees and shrubs will be planted. They receive directions from the YPS field workers. Which types fit together and which ones should you keep more apart. How deep will the holes become, because compost and absorber²⁾ must be added.



Absorber

Irrigation is being installed for the women, the schools, the temples and the mosques. The YPS team also advises on this. Drip irrigation saves water of 80 percent or more. Every crop gets exactly the water, where it is needed. It is also very labor-saving. If it weren't that expensive, we would apply it much more widely. Farmers who do not have a well themselves will dig a basin of 2 x 3 meters in which 6,000 liters of water can be stored. The place is co-determined by the Jalihal team. If it is installed in the wrong place, it will not be accessible for tankers to supply it later.

When the rain comes

From the arrival of the rain in June, the delivery of 150 trees and shrubs to the participants with hired trucks will start. 36 different varieties are planted, all of which are drought resistant if they have formed enough roots. Every farmer has his hands full, usually the whole family takes part. A YPS employee demonstrates how the absorber and the organic fertilizer should be applied and in what quantity. Together with the farmer, he plants five different crops. Then the farmer takes over under the watchful eye of the team member. As soon as he sees that the farmer has got the hang of it, he moves on to the next participant. It concerns 1,000 times 150 trees and shrubs that must be planted before the end of the year. The outgoing numbers are immediately noted and shortly afterwards recorded in the Excel that has been compiled for this purpose. Shortly after that planting is completed, each participant buys 50 crops from people from their own circle or from the local market. Everyone also takes care of that planting themselves. YPS does include the participants' own plantings in all controls.

The organization rests entirely with the YPS team. That is why it is possible to roll out the project on this scale in 6 years. And that size is precisely necessary to green the entire region in such a way that new and restorative life is created within the impoverished ecosystem.

35 women

Each year 35 women participate in the project. The fact that women are given a place in this project is especially important for their place within the traditional and patriarchal views that are leading in rural India. Participation is made possible for women by offering them extra guidance. A special employee has been hired for this. Because watering the growth is a large part of the work,



Drip irrigation

²⁾ Absorber is a complex protein compound that is applied to the soil in powder form. It retains water in the soil for months and only releases it to the roots of trees and shrubs. It remains active for three to five years, breaks down completely and is in no way harmful to the soil.

the women work with drip irrigation, which relieves them of a lot of work. It is good to note in this regard that women are already very busy. Taking care of the children, getting the meals, water and wood for cooking, taking care of the cow, the goats or the chickens, keeping the house clean and so many other activities. If women succeed in growing their plantings, it will greatly enhance their reputation. Perhaps more importantly, they will inspire other women to participate in the project in the years to come. The social significance of this project is great and will only increase in the coming years. When women become part of the improvement of living conditions across the region as actors, it will lead to a positive change in gender patterns.



Clothesline between the trees

15 local communities

Every year 15 local communities also participate. The division between schools, temples and mosques is not too frozen. These communities contribute to the social cohesion within the villages of our working area. In all these cases, a few persons are held responsible for the careful cultivation of the plantings. Here, too, drip irrigation is required because otherwise those responsible would have to spend too much time taking care of it. It is important that as many women and local communities as possible participate in the project as they create cross-connections in the various villages that are of great value. The higher costs that are necessary for these participants can be found in the budget.

It is the farmers, the women and the local communities who implement the project. It is YPS who, together with the two biology doctors³⁾, developed the project. YPS ensures that everything happens in the right order: the balloting of the participants, the training that is given in advance, the cultivation of crops in the YPS farm, the purchase of the other trees and shrubs, the water management, the continuous monitoring of all participants, the logistics aspects and the administrative settlement.

The field workers form the core of the YPS team⁴⁾guiding this project. These are 20 people who keep an eye on the big picture and create all the conditions for the implementation of the project. And it is 20 people who ensure that every participant, male and female, is visited regularly. Each of the thousand fields of the current year is inspected at least once a week. Each participant of the pilot⁵⁾and of the years 2019 and 2020 is visited once every two weeks. Thus, problems do not get a chance to become big. Damage, death and the presence of pests are immediately digitally reported to YPS and to the doctors. There solutions are sought and these are broadcasted without delay by YPS's own radio station. In this way, all participants are informed almost immediately and an impending plague is combated throughout the project.

Although it is one big project, the risk will soon be shared by thousands of participants, each serving their own interests. At the same time, together they form one major instrument to lift the entire region to a better quality of life.

³⁾YPS is continuously assisted by two retired biology doctors: Dr. Jamadagni and Dr. Patil.

⁴⁾See also the appendix Organizational Chart.

⁵⁾The pilot from 2018 was concluded very successfully and educational. 110 farmers each planted 200 trees and shrubs on a field. In 2019 we saw that a clothesline had already been stretched between two trees from the pilot.

Visiting

Dora and Huub Bosse⁶⁾ went to Jalihal in February 2020. They visited many participants: women, farmers and some temples. The crops are looking good. The 20 percent that did not make it was replaced by new crops or seeds in June. Both the participants and the staff are delighted with the progress.

Extra water

The Krishna River rises in the state of Maharashtra and then passes through the adjacent state of Karnataka, some 16 miles south of Jalihal. For nearly 10 years, YPS has advocated for water to be made available for the Jalihal region, but this has been consistently refused by the Karnataka government. For the first time, in the summer of 2019, water was pumped from the river to a basin from where it ends up in the Jalihal region through a concrete “channel” and natural height differences. There, the water fills various water depots, both below and above ground, thus securing the water supply. Water will probably also be supplied in a similar way in the coming years, but it is not yet guaranteed.



Chicken project

Infrastructure

It is striking how the infrastructure has improved in recent years. Many roads are being built, others are being widened to four-lane roads. Electricity is also becoming available to more and more villages. It places the possibilities of the entire region in a promising perspective.

The two biologists who supervise the project said: “We are writing history with this project”. All conditions are present: a strong organization, expertise, intensive guidance, motivated staff, participants who seize this opportunity and a financial source that makes all this possible. This project will certainly be imitated.

Stichting Jalihal

Since 2005, the Jalihal Foundation has been active for poor and single women at the request of YPS. Our working area is in India, in the southeast of the state of Maharashtra. Climate change is severely affecting the region. That is why we have shifted the focus and our efforts from 2018 will be focused on combating the consequences of those changes. Previously executed projects are: Sewing machine project, two Goat projects, Emergency aid project, Chicken project, Housing project. One Million Trees will run from the pilot in 2018 to the beginning of 2024. In 2020, Housing Project 2 started, as well as the emergency relief project Oxygen Machines.



Handover of oxygen machines